

Your child's speech and hearing milestones

Speech and hearing milestones are important!

Children with hearing loss often have problems at school and in social situations. That's because delayed or reduced exposure to language affects the child's ability to start using language to communicate.

Speech and hearing milestones provide an easy way for you to check on your child's development of language. If your child falls behind on achieving the milestones, there's a small chance they might have a hearing problem. But early help will result in the best possible outcome.

Whatever you do, be sure to seek help if you think your child has a hearing loss.

Follow your child's development

Hearing problems can have a big impact on a child's future happiness and success. But getting help early can make all the difference.

As a parent, you're well-placed to notice any possible problems with your child's hearing. So use the speech and hearing milestones to help you know what to expect. And if you have any concerns about your child's hearing, ask your doctor for a referral to an audiologist. *Remember, these are guidelines only—not a replacement for expert advice.*

At birth

Is your baby ...

- making sounds indicating pleasure?
- being startled or woken by a sudden loud noise?
- reducing activity when listening to sound?

At 3 months

Is your baby ...

- cooing and gurgling?
- crying differently for different needs?
- stopping activity for an unfamiliar voice?
- seeming to recognise your voice and calming if upset?
- watching your face when spoken to?
- enjoying rattles and noise-making toys?

At 6 months

Is your baby ...

- babbling to people when they speak?
- making different sounds, including *p*, *b* and *m*?
- noticing that toys make sounds?
- responding to 'no' and changes in tone of voice?
- looking around for the source of new sounds?

At 9 months

Is your baby ...

- using voice (not crying) to get your attention?
- babbling in a way that sounds like real speech?
- turning and looking up when you call their name?
- enjoying games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake?

At 1 year

Is your baby ...

- using sounds like *b*, *d*, *g*, *m* and *n* when 'talking'?
- imitating different speech sounds?
- 'chattering' in response to a human voice?
- recognising sounds for common items like *cup* and *juice*?
- starting to respond to requests like *come here* and *want more*?

Your child's first true words will start to appear between 12 and 15 months. Up until then, your child is mainly just making noises.

At 1½ years

Is your child ...

- giving one-word answers to questions?
- imitating many new words?
- using words with more than one syllable correctly, like *bottle*?
- speaking about 10 to 20 words?
- showing interest in sounds of radio, tv and stereo?

At 2 years

Is your child ...

- using his or her own first name?
- using 2–3 word sentences, like *mummy look* and *more milk*?
- following simple requests, like *come here*?
- listening to simple stories, songs and rhymes?
- pointing to a picture when asked—like *show me the dog*?

At 2½ years

Is your child ...

- speaking new words almost daily, including plurals?
- using negative expressions, like *it isn't*, or *I can't*?
- using questions correctly, like *who?*, *what?*, *where?*
- telling experiences using 4–5 word sentences
- answering simple questions, like *what do you do when you're sleepy?*

At 3 years

Is your child ...

- rapidly learning and using new words in sentences?
- talking about activities at school/friends' homes?
- enjoying being read to?
- understanding differences in meaning, for example between *go* and *stop* or *up* and *down*?

At 4 years

Is your child ...

- using about 800-1000 words, most of which can be understood by strangers?
- understanding simple questions, like *who?*, *what?*, *where?*
- responding to whispered speech?
- hearing calls from another room?
- identifying sounds of household objects, like a vacuum cleaner or washing machine?

At 5 years

Is your child ...

- speaking sentences with plenty of detail and adult-like grammar?
- telling stories that stick to a topic?
- sounding as clear when speaking, as other children?
- communicating easily with other children and adults?
- paying attention to short stories and answering simple questions about them?
- hearing and understanding most of what is said at home and at school?

Acknowledgement: Based on models developed by Epstein & Reilly (1989) and Capital & Coast District Health Board (2003).

Hearing problems can affect a child's future happiness and success. But getting help early can make a big difference.

If you are concerned about your child's hearing, ask your doctor to refer you to an audiologist right away.

More information & support

NFD (National Foundation for the Deaf)

www.nfd.org.nz

205 Parnell Road

P O Box 37729, Parnell, Auckland 1151

Ph 0800 867 446

Tel/TTY (09) 307 2922

Fax (09) 307 2923

Email enquiries@nfd.org.nz

The Hearing Association

www.hearing.org.nz

Suite 1, 5 Bouverie St, Petone

P O Box 5876, Lambton Quay, Wellington 6145

Ph 0800 23 34 45

Tel (04) 939 6754

Fax (04) 939 6719

Email enquiries@hearing.org.nz

NZ Federation for Deaf Children

www.deafchildren.org.nz

P O Box 18868, New Brighton, Christchurch 8641

Ph 0800 332 324

Email deafchildren@xtra.co.nz

New Zealand Audiological Society

www.audiology.org.nz

PO Box 9724, Newmarket

Auckland 1149

Ph/Fax 0800 625 166

Email mail@audiology.org.nz

We've prepared this fact sheet using information from external sources and advice from NZ-based experts. Please feel free to copy or use any of the material.

The information, while accurate at time of printing, cannot replace expert advice from a hearing professional. Always seek help quickly for any ear or hearing problem.

Published 2008