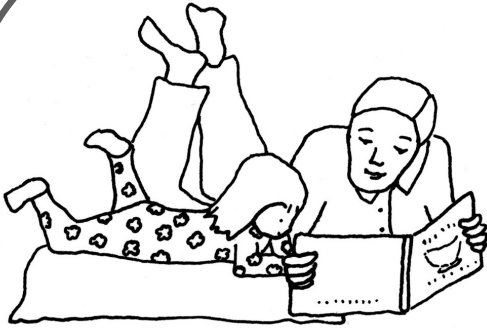


Story Power!



Does My Child Have a Speech Problem?

From the first time you respond to a baby's precious coos and gurgles, you are helping your child learn important communication skills. The process of turning those first sounds into understandable speech is a gradual one that sometimes causes concern as children get closer to school age. It is important to know that:

- Children generally understand far more (this is their "receptive speech") than they are able to articulate themselves ("expressive language").
- Language can develop smoothly and continuously, or in jumps and spurts.
- Because the development of speech varies, it is important not to compare your child's language development to other children's.
- If you suspect your child is having a delay in either receptive or expressive language, discuss your concerns with your family physician or pediatrician. Speech development is also assessed at the Early Childhood Screening required for every Minnesota child before kindergarten (ages 3 ½ and older).
- **Typical ages/milestones include:**
 - 2 weeks:** an infant can distinguish a parent's voice from another person's voice.
 - 3 months:** an infant can make vowel sounds.
 - 6 to 8 months:** the baby has added a few consonant sounds and may say "dada" or "mama," but does not yet attach them to individuals.
 - 1 year:** the baby will attach "mama" or "dada" to the right person, and can now respond to 1-step commands ("Give it to me.")
 - 15 months:** the baby continues to string vowel and consonant sounds together (gibberish) but may say real words within the gibberish. The infant may be able to say as many as 10 different words.
 - 18 months:** a toddler can say nouns (ball, cup), names of special people, and a few action words/phrases. Gestures are added to speech, and the child may be able to follow a 2-step command ("Go to your room and get a toy.")
 - 2 years:** the child can combine words into simple sentences like "Daddy go."
 - 3 years:** the child can use sentences 2-to-4 words long, follow simple instructions, and often repeat words he/she overhears in conversations.
 - 4 years:** the child can understand most sentences, understands physical relationships (on, in, under), uses sentences that are 4-5 words long, can say his/her name, age, and sex, and uses pronouns. Strangers can understand the child's spoken language.