



Early Identification

Every year in Ontario, approximately four in 1,000 babies are born deaf or hard of hearing. Through the Ontario Infant Hearing Program these babies can be found very early and given the help they need to develop language.

If a young child is identified as being deaf or hard of hearing, and has access to the special services that are available in Ontario, he or she can develop language and learn to communicate just as well as a hearing child.

Ontario's Infant Hearing Program has two major goals:

1. To identify infants who are born deaf or hard of hearing, or who are at risk of developing hearing loss in early childhood.
2. To provide parents of deaf or hard of hearing infants with the services their children need in order to develop communication and language skills, and to give them the best start in life

Can your baby hear?

It is important to know if your baby can hear.

The first months and years of a baby's life are very important for developing language: Undetected hearing loss is one of the causes of delayed language development. Delayed language development can lead to behaviour and emotional problems and later, to problems in school.

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Most deaf and hard of hearing children whose hearing loss is identified early, and who receive the support they need, will have the same chance to develop language skills as hearing children.

Hearing screening is available for your baby.

All newborn babies in Ontario can have their hearing screened, either in the hospital when they are born, or in a community setting. There is no charge for the screening. It is a simple, reliable process that is quick, completely safe and comfortable for your baby.

The technology used to screen your baby's hearing involves placing a small earphone in the baby's ear. Soft sounds are played through the earphone and the ear's response is measured and recorded. Your baby will probably sleep comfortably through the whole experience, and you will get the results right away.

If for some reason your new baby missed the hearing screening before you went home from the hospital contact the Centre 748-2337 or 1-888-779-9916 ext. 270.

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Some babies will also have a hearing assessment.

Even though most babies pass the hearing screening, some babies will have a refer result and will need a hearing assessment. The hearing assessment is performed by an audiologist who is an expert in testing babies' hearing. The Infant Hearing program staff will arrange an assessment appointment.

Most babies who receive a refer result have perfectly normal hearing. Debris in the ear canal or fidgeting during the screening are the most likely reasons for a refer result. However, if your baby does have a hearing problem, the audiologist will direct you to the services and supports that are available to help you and your child.

Source: Ministry of Children and Youth Services (www.children.gov.on.ca)

How can I help my baby learn language?

The ages and stages listed below show some of the milestones that mark the progress of young children as they learn to communicate and gain speech and language skills.

If at any time you think your child is not meeting these milestones, don't hesitate to contact your local Preschool Speech and Language Program. If you suspect that your child might have hearing loss, contact your nearest Infant Hearing Program.

Ages and Stages: Helping your child learn language

LANGUAGE MILESTONES	WHAT YOU CAN DO
Birth to 3 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none">looks at you while getting fedquiets when hearing familiar voices and soundsmakes cooing and gurgling sounds	You can: <ul style="list-style-type: none">talk to your babymake cooing and gurgling sounds back to your babysing to your baby
3 to 6 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none">turns eyes or head toward soundresponds to you by making sounds and/or moving arms and legssmiles and laughsbegins to make speech-like sounds - "buh," "ma," "boo"	You can: <ul style="list-style-type: none">smile and laugh with your babyshow interest in the sounds your baby is making and repeat them backprovide a variety of sounds e.g., music, outside noises, animal sounds, toys, and show delight in the sounds you heartell your baby what you are doing when you feed, bath, dress him/her

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LANGUAGE MILESTONES	WHAT YOU CAN DO
<p>9 to 12 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands simple requests - "give it to mommy", "don't touch" • understands simple questions - "Where's the ball?" • uses gestures or sounds to let you know what he/she wants or needs • says first word • begins to play "pat-a-cake" and "peek-a-boo" 	<p>You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage your child to use gestures and respond to them, e.g., when child raises arms to be picked up say, "you want up?" and then pick the child up. • talk about everything you are doing using simple words and short sentences • listen carefully to the sounds your child makes. You may hear their first word, e.g., "ba" for "ball", "u" for "up", "mook" for "milk" • play with your child and have fun
<p>12 to 18 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follows simple spoken directions such as "get the ball" • points to people, body parts or toys when asked • uses connected sounds that sound like sentences in a different language (jibberish) • uses 10 or more words • uses common expressions - "oh no," "all gone" 	<p>You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look at books and tell stories about the pictures, choose books that your child can hold e.g., board, cloth, or bath books • talk back to your child when he/she talks to you • use real words, not baby talk e.g., say "Give me", instead of "ta ta" and "bottle" not "baba" • pay attention to what your child is saying, not how they say it • play games and use toys and objects that your child enjoys
<p>18 to 24 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses 20 or more words • combines two or more words, such as "more juice" • uses many different speech sounds at beginning of words such as p, b, m, t, d, n • takes turns "talking" back and forth with you • listens to simple stories, rhymes and songs 	<p>You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use different kinds of words when you talk with your child (in, big, happy, jumping) • encourage your child to play with other children e.g., library story times, play groups • name and copy different sounds your child hears e.g., dog barking, bird singing, fire engine siren • use the adult way of saying words or phrases without correcting your child directly e.g., child says "Daddy car", You say "

Source: Ministry of Children and Youth Services (www.children.gov.on.ca)