

Will I grow out of it?

Milestones and Warning Signs for Speech and Language Development

The period between birth and five years of age is critical in the development of speech, language and hearing. Strong speech, language and hearing skills are important for later learning and success in school. Acting on concerns early is important.

If you have any concerns about your child not reaching the milestones, or if you answer yes to any warning sign listed below, contact a speech-language pathologist at your community health centre for more information.

first 3 months of life

- becomes startled at loud noises
- is soothed by calm, gentle voices
- likes to cuddle and enjoys being held
- cries, gurgles, grunts, says "ah"
- sucks and swallows well

Warning signs

- Your baby does not react to sound.

4 months to 6 months

- watches your face with interest when you talk
- tries to "talk" to you by cooing or babbling
- enjoys "talking" with you and smiles at you
- coos and squeals for attention
- has a special cry when hungry

Warning signs

- Your baby does not respond to your smiles and interactions.

6 months to 1st birthday

- understands some common words when used with gestures such as their name, "bye-bye," "up" and "give me"
- copies gestures such as waving bye-bye
- copies different speech sounds such as "oh oh" and "whee"
- babbles using a variety of different sounds such as "bababa dididi upup bupbup"

Warning signs

- Your child does not babble or try to talk.
- Your child has stopped babbling.
- Your child has had several ear infections.

Age 1 to 18 months

- understands simple questions/statements such as "Where is your nose?" and "Give me"
- nods "yes" and shakes head for "no"
- points to show interest in something or to ask for something
- takes part in imaginative play such as pretending to go to sleep or putting toy phone to ear
- babbles using a variety of sounds, which when put together sound like real sentences
- says a few words, although they may not be clear

Warning signs

- Your child does not talk at all.
- Your child does not interact with others.

- 18 months to 2nd birthday**
- understands simple questions such as “Where is mommy/daddy?” and “Where is your shoe?”
 - understands simple directions such as “Get your blanket.”
 - understands more words than can say
 - asks for a cookie or toy
 - says some two-word sentences such as “more juice,” “no night-night,” “daddy car.”
 - says “whatssat” a lot at about age two

- Warning signs**
- Your child does not talk or uses more gestures than words.
 - Your child does not appear to understand simple directions.

- Age 2 to 3rd birthday**
- answers simple questions such as “What’s your name?” and “Which one is the big doll?”
 - follows simple directions such as “Put the teddy bear to bed.”
 - puts a toy “in,” “on,” and “under” when asked
 - has a word for almost everything
 - uses two to three-word “sentences” to talk about and ask for things such as “That my truck,” “Puppy eat cookie,” “Doggy kiss me.”

- Warning signs**
- Your child shows frustration when trying to talk.
 - Your child’s speech is difficult for you to understand.
 - Your child does not yet put two words together.

- Age 3 to 4th birthday**
- understands questions about a picture story such as “Where did the bunny go?”
 - follows two related directions such as “Close the book and give it to me.”
 - gives directions such as “Fix this for me.”
 - uses a lot of sentences that have four or more words
 - asks many questions such as “what,” “where” and “why”

- Warning signs**
- Your child’s speech is difficult for strangers to understand.
 - Your child has difficulty playing imaginary games with others.

- Age 4 to 5th birthday**
- follows three related directions such as “Get your crayons, make a picture and put it on the counter.”
 - understands concepts such as “top,” “bottom,” “beside,” and “behind”
 - tells stories and shares ideas about things that happened recently
 - explains meanings of words when asked
 - says most sounds correctly except for a few like l, r, th, ch, sh

- Warning signs**
- Your child does not use complete and grammatically correct sentences.
 - Your child stutters.
 - Your child does not seem to be able to follow directions.

Early detection of difficulties at any age can make learning to talk easier. If your child shows any of the warning signs listed for his or her age group, contact the speech-language pathologist at your community health centre.