



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**  
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**  
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**  
Program Topic : **Babbling to babies boosts their brains (LOVE)**

**Guidelines to the presenter**

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

**Topic:**

**Babbling to babies boosts their brains!**

**Objectives:**

- To inform the audience when and how brain development starts; its rapid and exponential growth, and the role of language.
- To enable them to understand that while babies may not understand language or be able to talk, language development is taking place from conception.
- To confirm the important role parents play in the language and brain development of their children.

- To encourage them to bathe their babies in language throughout their daily activities through copying baby sounds, engaging, playing, talking, singing and telling stories from birth.
- To alert them to some of the danger signs that baby's language development is not reaching normal milestones.

**Introduction**

In our last couple of sessions we have talked a lot about the importance of play for young children – in fact for all of us! Play is fun; it's relaxing; it stimulates creativity and imagination; it fosters problem solving; it improves social skills and it builds brains! Today we are talking about something else that builds brains – language! We're going to look at how babbling to babies can boost their brains. So join us today as we discuss language development in babies.

| Questions   | Facts/Information   |
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| <p>1. <i>What an interesting title! So how can babbling to babies boost their brains? When does the baby's brain development start?</i></p> | <p>Brain development starts pretty much as soon as baby is conceived at the meeting of dad's sperm with Mum's egg! And from then on your baby's brain enters a stage of the most rapid development in a person's life. In fact between conception and age three, a child's brain undergoes an impressive amount of change. At birth, the baby's brain already has about 100 billion neurons! It doubles in size in the first year, and by age three it has reached 80 percent of its adult volume. These neurons and the connections between them in the brain, form incredibly rapidly and it is the pattern of these brain connections which determine how well the brain works and what it learns. Baby's brain development is strongly influenced by baby's environment and once baby is born, language</p> |

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| <p>2. <i>My goodness the speed and complexity of baby's brain development is truly amazing! If the brain develops from such an early stage in pregnancy, what about baby's hearing? When does that develop?</i></p> <p>3. <i>That is incredible! So babies can hear and distinguish the difference between sounds very early on. How do I know if my baby is hearing?</i></p> <p>4. <i>But while babies may be able to hear, they can't understand what we say, so what's the point in talking to them?</i></p> | <p>plays an important role in his environment. So you can see this is a very important period for brain development.</p> <p>Developments in science and research have enabled researchers to establish that baby's hearing develops while still in the womb, from about 4 months after conception. In fact researchers have found that babies in the womb can already distinguish their mother's voice from any other voice. How amazing is that!</p> <p>You'll know from watching your baby carefully. From birth your baby will be startled by loud sounds. He should be soothed and quietened by a calm, loving voice and will soon start to recognise mum's voice and smile when spoken to. From 4 to 6 months she can move her eyes in the direction of sounds, respond to changes in the tone of your voice and notice music and toys that make sounds. If you are worried that your baby is not reacting to loud noises do ask your clinic or medical practitioner to do a hearing screening test during one of your routine clinic visits. Remember – don't forget to take your baby's Road to Health Booklet!</p> <p>Babies hear all the sounds in their environment, but respond most especially to the sounds of being spoken to by the special people in their lives – mum and dad. That most precious of</p> |
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| <p>5. <i>So if baby's language development is about listening to and hearing language, can we just put baby next to a radio or TV?</i></p> <p>6. <i>So what can we do to support our babies' language development?</i></p> | <p>relationships, between you and your baby, as you look into her eyes, smile and coo at him, sing and talk to her – that is the 'food' for his language development. All babies, all over the world, experiment with all sort of sounds, but learn the language or languages they hear spoken to them. The more baby is spoken to and the richness and variety of language used, the more words they will grow up to understand and use. And language is the building block of thinking and brain development.</p> <p>No. Definitely not! The key to language development is in the loving relationship and the talk and interaction between you and your baby! The power lies in your love!</p> <p>From the time your baby is born, bathe him in language while you do all the everyday things with him - feeding, bathing, changing her nappy, playing with him or putting her down to sleep. Talk to him, tell her what you are doing or what will happen next; sing him songs and tell her stories. Even though baby may not understand your words, they will be absorbing the sounds. Once your baby starts to make sounds, coo and babble the same sounds back to him. Make eye contact, smile, respond to and encourage your baby's early, non-verbal attempts to communicate with you. Be patient and give your precious little one lots of time and</p> |
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7. *When can we expect that magic day when baby says her first word?*

attention as they try to 'talk' to or communicate with you. Watch baby's gestures. For example baby may lift his arms indicating he wants to be picked up. Voice that back to him in words – 'so you want me to pick you up I see'. Smile and applaud even the smallest or most confusing attempts at baby talk. Babies learn the power of speech by the reactions of the adults around them. Babies love to hear their parents' voices, and the more you talk to them, the more you help their speech develop. In fact you are a brilliant language teacher – the best there is!

While all babies go through the same stages of development, the rate at which development, including language development, takes place can differ greatly between one child and another. So just when your baby will say those magical first words varies greatly from individual baby to individual baby. Your baby's first attempts to communicate will be through crying to express hunger, cold, wetness, pain, discomfort, frustration and the need to be cuddled and comforted. Baby starts to make pleasure sounds (cooing and gooing) in the first 3 months and will watch your face as you talk. From 4 months baby starts to make a number of different babbling sounds such as goo, goo, goo, pa, pa, pa, ba, ba, ba or da,da,da or ma, ma, ma, ma. Many parents excitedly think he's saying 'Mama' or 'Dada' and she loves this reaction! He starts to chuckle and laugh and will often

entertain herself playing with sounds while lying in bed. From 7 months she will start to use gestures to communicate (for example waving to say goodbye) or non-crying sounds to get and keep attention. He will imitate many different speech sounds. She will listen when spoken to, may recognise her name and other words for common items in her environment, for example 'cup', 'juice', 'ball', 'biscuit'. She will understand a few basic words like 'no' and 'bye bye'. He will understand more words than he is able to say, but he will most probably be able to say one or two words like dog, dada, mama around his first birthday, even though the sounds may not be that clear. The day baby says his first recognizable word is a day of great excitement for his proud parents!

8. *Can you tell us what the difference is between speech and language?*

Speech and language are the skills we use to communicate with others. Speech is making the sounds that become words – the physical act of talking. Language is our system of using words to communicate – both to say what we mean and to understand what others say. Language is also the building block of understanding and thinking. A child who is surrounded by plenty of speech and language all the time, through plenty of interaction with the people around him, usually learns language skills faster. So you can do a great job of building your child's language skills and therefore her brain simply by listening and talking to him, playing, singing

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| <p>9. <i>So we've learned that language is an important building block for brain development. Are there any 'red flags' that parents should watch out for in baby's first year that could indicate their baby's language is not developing as it should?</i></p> | <p>rhymes and songs, and telling her lots of stories. Even though your baby may not understand everything, you can start looking at books or pictures of objects with him from about 6 months of age. She will love the closeness of the relationship with you in the shared experience of looking at books and talking about the pictures you see together. This will do a lot to build his language.</p> <p>Yes there are. As we mentioned above, if your baby does not show a startle reaction to a loud noise, this could indicate that she is not hearing well. Observe your baby closely. If your baby does not respond to your voice, or make eye contact, or turn his head towards sounds like voices or music or a rattle, it may indicate a problem. Ask your health practitioner to check it out on your next clinic visit. Similarly, be aware of your baby's babbling and playing with sounds. If baby is not babbling and making a variety of sounds by 9 months – get her checked at the clinic. Problems could be related to hearing or possible developmental delays. Most importantly, be very careful with any ear infections. If your baby is rubbing his ear or ears, or there is any discharge from the ear, do take him to the clinic as soon as possible. Untreated ear infections can lead to loss of hearing. Ear infections can also be a complication of bad colds, flu and upper respiratory tract infections – so do watch these</p> |
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**Conclusion**

Wow! This has been an amazingly interesting session. I had no idea that baby’s brain and language development start in the womb and grow and develop so dramatically in the early years. No wonder they say that the early years of life are the most important years in a person’s life. They are the foundation for her future success as a person, in school and in life. And as parents, we have such an important role to play. I had no idea that it could be as simple as spending quality time talking to my precious little one; that I was a specialist language teacher and that what I do with my baby and how I talk to him can so strongly influence his future.

**Learning outcomes**

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Have an overview of when and how brain development starts; its rapid and exponential growth, and the role of language.
- understand that while babies may not understand language or be able to talk, language development is taking place from conception.
- Understand the important role parents play in the language and brain development of their children.
- Be motivated to bathe their babies in language throughout their daily activities through copying baby sounds, engaging, playing, talking, singing and telling stories from birth.
- Recognise some of the danger signs that baby’s language development is not reaching normal milestones.