

Will I Grow Out of It?

Milestones and Warning Signs for Speech and Language Development

Age Birth – 2 Years

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 feeds well

Warning Signs:

- Shows no reaction to sound
- Does your child have problems eating?

4 months to 6 months

- Watches your face with interest when you talk
- Tries to “talk” to you using sounds
- Enjoys making sounds with you, smiles at you
- Coos and squeals for attention
- Has a special cry when hungry

Warning Signs:

- Are any of the above behaviours missing?
- Is your child very quiet?

6 months to 1st Birthday

- Understands some common words when used with actions e.g. “bye, bye”, “up”, “give me” and own name
- Tries to say sounds and words – “ba, ba”, “na, na”
- Tries to sing along with radio/TV
- Laughs and may copy a cough

Warning Signs:

- Are you concerned that your child is not reacting to noises and words or making sounds?
- Does your child have lots of ear infections?

1 year to 18 months

- Strings sounds together like making sentences
- Understands simple questions/statements e.g. “where is your nose?”, “give me”
- Says words (not clearly)
- Nods “yes” and shakes head for “no”
- Enjoys rhythm and likes to “dance” to music

Warning signs:

- Does your child use less than 10 words?
- Does your child choose to play alone?

18 months to 2nd Birthday

- Says some 2-word sentences such as “more milk”, and “all gone”, “me go”
- Asks for a cookie or toy
- Says “whatssat” a lot at about age 2
- Understands “where is mommy/daddy?”
- Understands simple directions “get your coat”
- Understands more words than can speak/say
- Reacts to own name

Warning signs

- Does your child use more actions than words?
- Are you concerned about your child’s ability to talk and/or understand?

Age 2 – 5 Years

Age 2 to 3rd Birthday

- Combines words in 2-3 word sentences such as “me do it”
- Follows simple directions, e.g. “put teddy to bed and come here”
- Answers simple questions, e.g. “what’s your name?”, “which one is the big doll?”
- Can put a toy “in”, “on”, “under” when asked
- Answers simple questions about objects, e.g. “which one do we eat with?”

Warning Signs

- Does your child show frustration when trying to talk?
- Do you have trouble understanding your child’s speech?
- Does your child use 1 word sentences?

Age 3 to 4th Birthday

- Follows 3 related directions, e.g. “Close the book, give it to me and get a new one.”
- Tells first and last name
- Understands questions about a picture story, e.g. “Where did the bunny go?”
- Can reason - “What do you do when you’re hungry/cold?”
- Tells a short story, e.g. “two kids played ball”
- Sentences are usually 3 and 4 words long
- Gives directions such as “Fix this for me”
- Asks many questions: “what”, “where”, “why”

Warning Signs

- Does your child use incomplete sentences?
- Do people have trouble understanding what your child says?

Age 4 to 5th Birthday

- Follows 3 and 4 directions such as “get your crayons, make a picture and give it to the baby”
- Speaks sounds clearly except maybe l, r, s, k, th, ch, sh
- Answers questions like “Are you sleepy/thirsty?” or “What should you do if you hurt yourself?”
- Tells about objects and events
- Can show you “top”, “bottom”, and several colours
- Can give meanings of words

Warning Signs

- Does your child use incomplete sentences?
- Does your child stutter?
- Does your child have problems following directions?

Early detection of problems at any age can make learning to talk easier.

If you answered “yes” to any of the warning signs at your child’s age, contact your local public health office for more information.