



# Speaking for Children

**What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!**

## **The ABCs of Child Development**

### ***Tips for boosting your child's growth and brain development***

Infants start learning and exploring from the day they are born – and 90 percent of their brains develop in their first five years! As your child's first teacher, you play an important role in helping him or her grow up to be healthy and ready to learn.

FIRST 5 Sonoma County offers a few tips to help parents and caregivers foster healthy child development.

#### **Start a Conversation**

Develop your infant's language skills by talking with him or her often. Not only is language the foundation for your child's thinking and communication skills, it also helps to nurture bonds of love and trust between parent and child.

- Encourage your baby to make sounds and be sure to respond.
- Talk, sing and rhyme to your infant – it helps him or her learn new words.
- Read daily to your baby and repeat stories to stimulate language and listening.

#### **Make the Most of Teachable Moments**

Whether you're running errands or driving to school, make the most of opportunities all day to teach toddlers and preschoolers new lessons.

- Involve your child in activities like shopping at the supermarket – learn shapes when choosing fruits and vegetables in the produce section.

- Point to signs and traffic lights to teach words and colors while you're driving.
- Guide your child to say "please" and "thank you" when asking for help at the library or checking out books.

#### **Encourage Curiosity and Creativity**

Being curious is important because it's how children learn new ideas. By asking questions and finding answers, kids discover ways to solve problems and learn how the world works.

- Ask your toddler questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer – this fosters thinking and communication skills.
- Play with your child and encourage imagination.
- Try new activities, like gardening or cooking, to stimulate children's minds.

### **It's Time to Change How We View a Child's Growth!**

As they grow, children are always learning new things. These are just some of the things you should be looking for as your child grows. Because every child develops at his or her own pace, your child may reach these milestones slightly before or after other children the same age. Use this as a guide, and if you have any concerns, talk with your child's doctor or nurse.

#### **By the end of 7 months, many children are able to:**

- turn head when name is called
- smile back at another person
- respond to sound with sounds
- enjoy social play (such as peek-a-boo)

By the end of 1 year (12 months), many children are able to:

- use simple gestures (waving “bye-bye”)
- make sounds such as “ma” and “da”
- imitate actions in their play (clap when you clap)
- respond when told “no”

By the end of 1 1/2 years (18 months), many children are able to:

- do simple pretend play (“talk” on a toy phone)
- point to interesting objects
- look at object when you point at it and tell them to “look!”
- use several single words unprompted

By the end of 2 years (24 months), many children are able to:

- use 2- to 4-word phrases
- follow simple instructions
- become more interested in other children
- point to object or picture when named

By the end of 3 years (36 months), many children are able to:

- show affection for playmates
- use 4- to 5-word sentences
- imitate adults and playmates (run when other children run)
- play make-believe with dolls, animals, and people (“feed” a teddy bear)

By the end of 4 years (48 months), many children are able to:

- use 5- to 6-word sentences
- follow 3-step commands (“Get dressed, comb your hair and wash your face.”)
- cooperate with other children

**Questions to ask your child’s doctor or nurse:**

- What can I do to keep track of my child’s development?
- What should I do if I’m worried about my child’s progress?
- Where can I go to get more information?
- Can you refer me to a specialist for more information?

*From CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5 by Steven Shelov, Robert E. Hannermann, © 1991, 1993, 1998, 2004 by the American Academy of Pediatrics.*

### From the American Academy of Pediatrics:

The first five years of your child’s life are critical to his or her health and healthy development. Regular well-child visits with your baby’s doctor can catch small problems in development. Small problems may be easily corrected before they become big problems. One of the main goals of well-child doctor visits is to make sure your child is developing normally.



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends frequent developmental screenings. A screening is a brief list of questions that you answer about your child. It asks about the things your child can do at each stage of development. It helps parents better understand their child’s developmental stages. It also helps identify children at risk of a developmental delay or problem. Your doctor or nurse should do these screenings when your child is 9-, 18-, and 30-months old. Your doctor should do the screenings more often if you or your doctor have a concern about your baby’s development.

**Screening/Assessment Resources:**

*If you have concerns about your child – check with your medical provider or contact one of the following:*

**Watch Me Grow Program.....591-0170**  
Early Learning Institute (ELI) - Free Developmental screenings for young children 0-5. Spanish spoken, county-wide, [www.earlylearninginstitute.com](http://www.earlylearninginstitute.com)  
**311 Professional Center Drive, Rohnert Park**

**Early Start Warm Line .....1-800-646-3268**  
Free early intervention services for families with infants/toddlers (birth-36 months) with disabilities or at risk of having disabilities. Spanish spoken, county-wide, [www.nbrc.net](http://www.nbrc.net)  
**2351 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa**

### About First 5 Sonoma County

**First 5 Sonoma County** funds children’s health insurance and programs that improve childcare quality, help children succeed in school, and help parents provide safe and nurturing environments for their children. For more information on **First 5 Sonoma County** and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit [www.first5sonomacounty.org](http://www.first5sonomacounty.org)