



# P Parent CONNECTIONS

## Let's Talk

Encourage children's language skills. Language development begins during the first few months of life as infants respond to the sounds around them.

Even at this early age there is much that you can do to encourage your baby's language development. Talk to your baby as often as you can while you are feeding, bathing and diapering. Use your baby's name when you speak to her and make different expressions with your face. As early as six weeks you can begin to read books to your child too. Your child is listening to everything you say.

The most important thing parents can do is talk to their baby. Just talk. Share what you are doing, what you are seeing and how you feel. It is important for your baby to hear language. Talk and assume that your baby does understand.

### Tips for Parents

Here are some easy guidelines you can use to encourage your child's language development.

- Use simple sentences and pause between sentences.
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Talk naturally to your child about what he is doing and what he sees.
- Take the time to listen to your child. Respond with praise so she knows you have been listening
- Encourage, but don't push, your child to talk. Everyone develops at their own pace.

### Encouraging Language Through Easy Activities

There are easy activities you can do at home with your child to encourage language development and expand vocabulary.

- Put household objects in a box and have your child name each one as he removes it.

- Look at photo albums and name the people you see.
- Make basic books by cutting and gluing favorite pictures from old magazines.
- Sing simple songs such as Old MacDonald and leave words out for your child to fill in.
- Play easy games such as naming body parts, foods or articles of clothing.
- Put simple story books in a basket for you and your child to choose from everyday.

So talk to your baby. Have great conversations with your toddler and preschooler. By doing so you are supporting their language skills, their social skills and their thinking skills. Everything in your baby's growth is connected. But the best thing about talking with your child is developing the bond that you will always have with one another.

## When to Potty Train?

As children approach 2 years of age, parents frequently start thinking about toilet training. Age must be considered with other factors including physiologic, physical and psychological readiness.

Before a child can be toilet trained, she must have attained a certain amount of "bladder readiness". In infancy, babies are unable to hold large amounts of urine. As a child grows older, her bladder becomes more mature, and is able to hold larger amounts of urine between voids and increase the interval between voids. When you notice that your child is dry at longer intervals (i.e. dry after a nap or for at least 2 hours) and is voiding large amounts at a time, then that is a sign that your child may be physiologically ready for toilet training. Another component is the ability of your child to recognize that she is voiding.

Another component is physical readiness. This includes the ability to walk well (to and from the bathroom), to be able to pull pants up and down, and the ability to get on and off the toilet/potty chair fairly independently.

The last component is probably the most important: psychological readiness. Or what I like to call willingness! If a child is not bothered by a wet or dirty diaper, if she is uninterested or unwilling to

sit on the potty, believe me, you are not going to get very far. As the saying goes, you can place a toddler on a potty, but you can't make her pee. Toddlers quickly learn that they can control their bodily functions.

Once your child is showing all these components this is a good time to "set the stage" for toilet training well (letting her observe others using the toilet, introducing books or videos on the subject, starting to talk about them using the potty soon).

Lastly look at yourself and your family situation. In order for toilet training to be as painless and smooth as possible, make sure that you are ready. Some kids toilet train easily, others not so much. If you are busy at work, moving, or have a new baby coming soon, it's ok to wait a few months to let things settle down. This is probably one of the biggest steps for your child and it's worth it to wait.

Just remember, all good things come with time. Or as my then 3 and a half year old son said "You have to be patient, and then the pee will come!"

## Do your kids eat breakfast?

By many reports, 40% of kids don't. But everyone knows that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, right?

Here is some proof:

- The State of Minnesota Breakfast Study showed that 'students who ate breakfasts before starting school had a general increase in math grades and reading scores, increased student attention, reduced nurse visits, and improved student behaviors'
- Children who eat a healthy breakfast 'meet their daily nutritional needs, keep their weight under control, have lower blood cholesterol levels, attend school more frequently, and make fewer trips to the school nurses office complaining of tummy aches.'
- Kids 'who eat breakfast are more likely than children who skip breakfast to consume foods

with adequate levels of minerals, such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, and vitamins, such as riboflavin, vitamins A, C, and B12, and folate.'

- Kids 'who skip breakfast do not make up for the missed calories at other meals.'

So why aren't your kids eating breakfast each day?

Most likely it is because your family is already rushed in the morning and you don't feel like you have time to provide a nutritious breakfast. But remember that breakfast doesn't have to mean home-made waffles or french toast every day. There are many quick and easy breakfasts that you can give your kids that are also nutritious.



According to the American Dietetic Association, these can include:

- ready-to-eat cereal with fruit and milk
- toasted bagel with cheese
- fruit-filled breakfast bar and yogurt
- toasted waffle topped with fruit and yogurt
- fruit smoothie (fruit and milk whirled in a blender)
- peanut butter on whole-wheat toast

If you can't provide a healthy breakfast for your child at home, you might also look at breakfasts offered at your child's school or daycare.

## Struggling with Child Care Payments?

See if you qualify for Employment Related Day Care, through the Department of Human Services. These offices also handle food stamps, Oregon Health Plan and cash assistance programs.

Ashland, 482-2041; Medford, 776-6172; White City, 846-8700; Grants Pass 474-3101; Cave Junction 592-4149

Online: [www.dhs.state.or.us](http://www.dhs.state.or.us), click on Children & Teens, Child Care-Parent Info, Copay Estimate