

Eight to twelve months:

- Will turn to look towards where a new sound is coming from.
- Recognises / responds to an ever-increasing number of familiar sounds.
- Will make or copy tuneful vocalisations.
- Shows an increasing capacity for spoken language.
- Enjoys exploring / imitating new sounds (a model of soft quiet sounds encourages awareness of the quiet sounds in speech).

Help with this leaflet:



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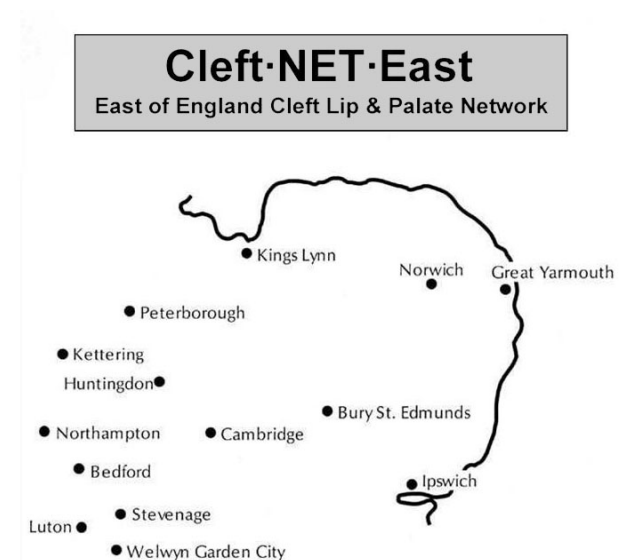
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Cleft Palate Network

Patient Information Early listening skills



Early Listening Skills

During their formative years, children develop listening skills. Listening cannot be taught; it develops as children become more motivated to listen to sounds in the environment. Opportunities are needed to attach meaning to these sounds.

The best opportunities to listen happen naturally and are a part of everyday life.

Here are some suggestions for encouraging sound awareness:

- When you hold your baby, look eye-to-eye and they will watch your face, your lip movement and your facial expression. They will hear your voice and the differences between the speech sounds that you make – feeling a flow of air as you speak.
- When you cuddle your baby they can feel the vibration of your voice in your chest as you talk or sing.

Everyday sounds can also be used to stimulate listening:

- **People's voices** – talking, laughing, whispering or singing.
- **Household sounds** – telephones, dishwashers, microwaves, filling the kettle, keys in a lock, running bath water.
- **Garden noises** – mowers, drilling, dogs barking, cats meowing, birds singing.
- Use **toys** that make sounds to interest your baby.

Sounds need to be interesting and have meaning to attract 100% of a child's attention. Sounds that your baby cannot connect to a person or object are less interesting. It will take time for your baby to make sense of these new sounds. Draw their attention to the person / object that has produced the sound and show them the pleasure in hearing the sound.

It is a good idea to create opportunities to encourage listening by having 'quiet times' during the day when there is no television or radio.

The development stages of listening in normally hearing children

One to two months:

- 'Startle' reflex (blinking) to sudden loud sounds.
- Eyes widening / moving / stilling to a sound.
- Able to distinguish between different sounds in speech although they have no meaning.

Two to three months:

- Will focus on sounds that are familiar and will react to them (for example: parents' voices without actually seeing them).
- Responsive to tones of voice – enjoy tuneful phrases such as 'oh dear' and 'night night'.
- Often settled by the sound of a musical toy.

Four to eight months:

- The ability to locate where a sound comes from becomes more accurate and consistent. Smiles / turns towards a familiar voice.
- Takes turns in making noises when talked to.
- Will look intently at faces when talked to.