

A Newsletter of WV Birth To Three Regional Administrative Unit 7

# BRIDGES

Early Intervention...Building Bridges for a Bright Future



## Why You Should Talk to Your Infant

Speaking to infants from birth is critical for accelerating brain development, building foundational language skills, and fostering emotional security. Engaging in back-and-forth conversations—even with newborns—strengthens cognitive, social, and emotional development. Consistently hearing words nourishes the brain, enhancing future literacy and vocabulary.

### **Key Reasons to Speak to Your Infant:**

- **Brain Development:** Consistent, high-quality interaction (or "serve and return") builds neural connections, crucial for language and cognitive growth.
- **Vocabulary Development:** Babies in language-rich environments develop a stronger vocabulary. The more words they hear, the more they can learn.
- **Emotional Security and Bonding:** Your voice comforts, soothes, and reassures them, helping them feel safe and loved.
- **Early Communication Skills:** It helps them understand that vocalization is a tool for interaction, encouraging them to babble and, eventually, speak.

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- Raising Infants and Toddlers into People You Like to Be With
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- Take Your Child Outside to Play

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# The Importance of Tummy Time

Tummy time can begin as early as the first day you bring your baby home from the hospital. Starting immediately helps newborns get comfortable on their bellies, aiding in the development of neck, shoulder, and core muscles. Initial sessions should be short, supervised, and happen while the baby is awake and alert.

## **Key Tummy Time Guidelines:**

- **How Soon:** Day 1 or 2, as soon as you are home from the hospital.
- **Duration:** Start with 2–3 short sessions per day, lasting about 3 to 5 minutes each.
- **Progression:** Gradually increase the time to a total of 15–30 minutes daily by 2 months, and about an hour daily by 3 months.
- **Positions:** Place them on their tummy on a firm surface, across your lap, or on your chest while you are lying down.
- **Safety:** Never leave the baby unattended during tummy time and never let them sleep in this position.
- **Tips:** Perform sessions 20-30 minutes after feeding to prevent spitting up.



Tummy time is crucial for infants to build neck, shoulder, and core strength, facilitating motor skills like lifting the head, rolling, and crawling. Starting from birth, this supervised, awake activity reduces the risk of flat spots (plagiocephaly) on the head, improves visual development, and aids in sensory integration.

## **Key Benefits of Tummy Time**

- **Muscle Development:** Strengthens neck, back, shoulder, and arm muscles, which are essential for sitting, crawling, and walking.
- **Prevents Flat Spots:** Reduces the risk of developing a flat, soft spot on the back of the head (plagiocephaly) caused by too much time on the back.
- **Improves Motor Skills:** Helps babies develop the coordination needed for turning over and reaching.
- **Visual Development:** Enhances visual tracking and awareness of their environment as they move their heads.
- **Boosts Physical Development:** Aids in strengthening the core and improving overall balance.

## **Raising Infants and Toddlers into People You Like to Be With**

Babies and toddlers are natural learners. As parents, you are their biggest influence and most important teacher. You will teach your child by the behavior you model for your child.

### **Caring**

Your child will learn how to treat you and others by the way you treat them. When you respond to cries, they learn they can trust you. They learn to be caring about others as you care for them. When you touch with gentle hands, they learn to use gentle touches also. Of course, as your child grows, it is important for you to also use words to describe how you understand their feelings or how you like their gentle touches. One way you show you care about your child is by being a good listener. When they babble to you, copy their sounds. When they begin to use words, let them know that you understand what they are trying to tell you. As you take time to listen and respond, as you get down on your child's level so that you can hear what they have to share, as you are fully present, your child learns how important it is to give attention to others.

### **Respecting Others**

It is important that your child learns to feel a part of their community, so they feel important to others and treats others as though they are also to be respected. Show interest in the people in your child's world. Call them by name. Help your child learn to put away their toys when finished playing, put garbage in the trash can, and in other ways follow rules that we have in our homes, classroom and community that help us to treat others with respect. Talk to your child about why we stop at traffic lights (not so we don't get in trouble with the police but so that everyone gets a turn driving safely,) why we put our things away (so everyone knows where to look for them when they want to use them,) and why we try to respect others' feelings. Your toddler might not understand everything you tell them right now but the more you talk about the community, the more they will want to be a member of it. When you show respect for your spouse, your child's teacher, a fellow driver or another young child at the center, your child sees that and learns to show respect also.

### **Self-Confidence**

Children learn to be confident in their abilities as they try to do new things in new ways. Failure is often part of the equation. They won't suddenly walk without sometimes falling, won't suddenly talk without some mishaps with pronouncing words. As a parent, you encourage. If you hear a word spoken incorrectly, you accept it but make sure you say it correctly when you use it. If they try a task that you realize is not impossible, don't do it for them but, if needed, show them what might help reach the goal. As we allow our toddlers to become independent, they feel proud of their abilities, and they want to learn more skills. Our job is not to keep them dependent on us but to help them to enter the world with skills that prepare them to deal with people and situations safely.

Our job is to help them be the kind of people we like to be around by being that person ourselves.



## HOME VISITATION PROGRAMS

### Wyoming County:

#### **Early Head Start**

MountainHeart Community Services, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1509  
Oceana, WV 24970  
(304) 682-8271 ext. 107  
[pshelton@mhthwv.org](mailto:pshelton@mhthwv.org)

*Serving low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families*

#### **Right from the Start**

CASE WV  
355 Bluefield Avenue  
Bluefield, WV 24701  
(304) 323-8315  
[cgwinn@casewv.org](mailto:cgwinn@casewv.org)

*Serving pregnant women on Medicaid or RFTS Maternity Services and Medicaid-eligible infants up to age 1 year*

#### **Parents as Teachers**

MountainHeart Community Services  
PO Box 1509  
Oceana, WV 24970  
304-682-8721, ext. 110  
[mlester@mhthwv.org](mailto:mlester@mhthwv.org)

*Serving pregnant women and families with children up to ages 3-5 years*

## HOME VISITATION PROGRAMS

### Mercer County:

#### **Early Head Start**

CASE WV  
355 Bluefield Avenue  
Bluefield, WV 24701  
304-324-0450 Ext. 1212  
[cshepherd@casewv.org](mailto:cshepherd@casewv.org)

*Serving low-income infants and toddlers and their families, and pregnant women and their families*

#### **Parents As Teachers**

REACHH Family Resource Center  
411 Temple Street  
Hinton, WV 25951  
(304) 466-2226  
[www.reachhfrfc.org](http://www.reachhfrfc.org)  
[jennifer.adkins@reachhfrfc.org](mailto:jennifer.adkins@reachhfrfc.org)

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# Hey, Let's Go Outside to Play!

Letting kids play outside is vital for their health, offering better vision, increased Vitamin D, and stronger immune systems, while reducing stress. Unstructured outdoor play fosters creativity, independence, and social skills like conflict resolution. It is recommended to encourage daily outdoor time to improve motor skills and mental focus.

## Key Benefits of Outdoor Play

- **Physical Health:** Develops strength, coordination, and agility while reducing the risk of myopia (nearsightedness) from improved vision over distance.
- **Mental Well-being:** Reduces stress, anxiety, and boosts happiness.
- **Social & Emotional Skills:** Promotes independence, confidence, creativity, and problem-solving.
- **Immune System:** Exposure to nature and outdoor microbes strengthens the immune system.

Prioritizing this time is a crucial investment in health and happiness.



Visit our WV Birth to Three website: [WV Birth to Three - Early Intervention - Home page](#)

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