

Early

Communication

Support for parents



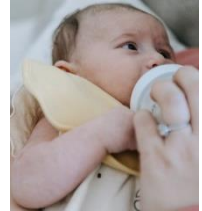
How babies communicate

Did you know that your baby is communicating with you from birth? Here are some of many ways a baby tells us something:

Facial expression

For example:

- looking relaxed
- looking uncomfortable or worried
- widening eyes
- furrowed brow
- looking briefly at a person or object
- responding to how a person is talking (e.g., if they're upset or happy) – this is from 8 weeks after their due date



Body tone

For example:

- relaxed or tense
- becoming still
- stretching
- arching back



Body changes

For example:

- change in colour (going red, blue or pale)
- change in breathing (quicker or slower)
- increased dribbling
- blink or jerk in response to a sudden noise
- eye watering
- sweating
- putting hands to mouth



Making sounds

For example:

- crying using different tones
- low-pitched contented sounds; coos
- hiccoughs or yawning



What you can do

Each baby will use the ways of communicating above differently. Although your baby is very good at communicating, you can help by spending time learning how they communicate, then responding to them: everyone wants to communicate more if their communication is understood. This continues into childhood and beyond!

Respond to your baby's communication



You can describe what they're doing or say what you think they're communicating. For example, if your baby is clearly unhappy, you could say something like, 'You're not happy: do you want a cuddle?'. It doesn't matter that your baby won't understand the words; the important part is that you've responded and your voice will reassure them.

Use facial expression

Your baby is learning to communicate so you can help them by doing lots of smiling and nodding or imitating them.



Give time for your baby to respond

Babies take longer to respond than children and adults: up to 30 seconds to react. Give them time to communicate with you.



Use Parentese



This is where you put more ‘ups and downs’ into your voice, talking slowly. It is good for helping your baby interact with you.

Make sure your baby is comfortable

Babies communicate more if they’re comfortable: make sure that light and noise levels are low (talk softly to them!) and they’re lying in their natural curled-up position.

If they’re having a procedure, communicate that all is well by holding them – staff will show you how to do this.

Be aware all babies need ‘down time’, where they’re left to just ‘be’. You’re the expert on your baby and you will be able to read their cues best once you know them!

If you have any queries, please contact the Neonatal Speech & Language Therapy Team via the Dyson Centre for Neonatal Care (01225 824438 or 01225 824833).

You may also find this website useful:

<https://eismart.co.uk/resources/#podcasts-leaflets>.



Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG

01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

Date of publication: Feb 2024 | Ref: RUH NIC/036
© Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust