



Dear Parents,

- At around 8 months, babies understand about 80% of what we say to them. Understanding the meaning of words is called *receptive language*. When babies begin to speak words, they are using *expressive language*. The understanding of words signals the appropriate time to teach little ones sign language.
- Sign language will provide a communication bridge between babies' understanding of language and their ability to speak. It will allow them to let others know when they want something or when they have had enough of something. It will help them communicate with their peers which in turn will help with squabbles that occur because of children's inability to let others know what they are trying to communicate.
- Most languages are stored on one side of the brain. For example, English and Spanish are stored on the left side of the brain while many Asian languages are stored on the right side of the brain. But sign language is stored on both sides of the brain which is a big advantage for processing information.

## What You Can Do

Teach your baby sign language beginning at 8 months. Be patient. Give her time to figure out that the hand movements you are using represent words. It generally takes several weeks for little ones to catch on. Always say the word when you make the sign. This is what allows the wiring for sign language to encompass both hemispheres.



mommy



daddy



more



eat



drink



all done



play



I want



Dear Parents,

Routines are what little ones use to tell time. They know that mommy picks them up after their afternoon nap. They know that bedtime follows bath time or story time. Routines help babies feel secure and in control.

When routines are broken, babies can become frustrated and irritable. They don't know what to expect. Their world has taken a turn and they don't know why. Things become chaotic. Think about how you feel when you forget to wear your watch, leave your cell phone at home, or have house guests changing up your normal routine. While as adults we have learned to compensate for the unexpected, little ones have not yet learned to do this. They need the comfort of the familiar and the consistency of patterns they know and understand.



## What You Can Do

- Create routines right from the beginning. Without routines, your baby's world feels random and overwhelming.
- Pay attention to your baby's cues as you set routines. You will know when your baby is hungry because she will most likely move her mouth in a smacking movement or chew her hands. You will know when the best time is for play time because your baby will be fully alert. You will know when it is time to sleep because your baby will rub her eyes and have trouble maintaining eye contact.
- Maintain routines as much as possible but don't panic when routines get interrupted or broken on occasion.
- When the unexpected happens, understand that your baby may show concern. Try to build in as much consistency as possible. For example, if bedtime gets off schedule, try to keep other routines associated with it intact, such as reading a story or having a snack.
- Build routines around the important parts of your baby's day. For example, naptime may include a few moments of rocking before going into the crib or perhaps a few minutes of lullaby music. Potty time may include a book to look through and a big hug when successful. Saying good-bye at school might include a hug, a few words about your return and a wave goodbye. Each of the components of a routine will help your baby through the activity.
- When visiting away from home, make sure to take the components of your routines with you. When the surroundings are different, the activities can help maintain consistency.



Dear Parents,

Children between 14 and 18 months are at a developmental stage when they are testing limits. They have an opinion and are anxious to make it heard. It is important to set limits and make sure children stay within those limits. Children need to learn that "no" means no. Because the brain wires from experiences, it is critical that you set and hold boundaries during this time. If you are wishy-washy, your child will not have any sense of limits and without understanding limits, your child cannot develop self-control.

## What You Can Do

- When you say "no," mean it even if you rethink your decision. Babies are too young to understand your rationale for changing a decision. They assume their tantrum has changed your mind and this reinforces the opposite of what you want (self-control).
- Discuss rules with all members of your family (spouse, grandparent, siblings) so that everyone will reinforce the same restrictions.
- Be consistent. For example, if food is not allowed in some areas of the home, make this a consistent rule in all cases, including a rule for other people in your home. Consistency over time helps children understand boundaries and, believe it or not, your child needs and wants boundaries.

### Follow these simple steps when a tantrum occurs.

1. Put into simple words what you believe the problem is. Many tantrums escalate because children don't think we understand what they want.
2. Move on with your task. Let your child cry it out.
3. When your child is calm, briefly explain why she couldn't have her way.

