

Ask the Pediatrician: Shouldn't my 1-year-old baby be talking by now?

April 6 2021, by Datta Munshi, American Academy Of Pediatrics



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My baby is turning 1 this month. Should she be talking by now?

Not necessarily. Infants and children grow and develop on their own,

individual timelines. This means that they reach major milestones like talking through gradual progress from a series of smaller achievements.

Speech development in infants starts right after they are born. The soothing voices they hear during diaper changes and feedings, for example, teach conversation basics such as, "I cry, and someone responds." Then there's that magical first time they look into your eyes and coo and smile, usually at around 2 months of age. These moments usually get an immediate and adoring response from parents and cement verbal and nonverbal skills such as voice tone, turn-taking, noise imitation and verbal speed.

Between 4 and 7 months, [babies](#) start making repetitive sounds like "bah" or "dah." Their constant babbling allows them to experiment with different volumes and pitches. It also helps them fine-tune the message they want to communicate to others.

At around 6 or 7 months, babies start to mimic simple words like "mama," "dada," "doggie," and "go." Responding, repeating, and adding sounds and words through face-to-face interaction, conversation and reading boosts further [speech development](#).

When they are about 8-12 months old, babies start to attach meaning to gestures, words and phrases they see and hear every day. They may begin to link words to actions when they hear simple sentences such as "Let's take a bath," or "Let's get in the car seat." At this age, babies are like sponges. They absorb every smile, frown and conversation as they start to comprehend and interact with the world around them. And they practice communicating back with gibberish, high-pitched screams, laughs, single words and gestures.

Although it may be as much as a year or more before you can interpret any of her babbling, your baby can understand many of your words well

before her first birthday. And, before she can say many, if any, words, she's probably comprehending more than you suspect.

Around the time they reach their first birthday, babies babble using different sounds. They may say one or two simple words like "mama," "dada" or "bye-bye," recognize their name and people they see every day, and understand simple sentences like, "Where is daddy?"

Don't hesitate to share with your [pediatrician](#) any concerns you may have, such as if your baby:

- doesn't respond to your voice or loud noises
- stops babbling, vocalizing simple words, or doing things he or she used to do
- seems overly sensitive to certain noises like a blender
- doesn't seem to like to cuddle, smile or interact with others

While it is normal to see variation in speech at this age, pediatricians can help make sure that your child is on track during well visits, which offer:

- **Prevention:** Your child gets scheduled immunizations to prevent illness. You also can ask your pediatrician about nutrition and safety in the home and at school.
- **Tracking growth and development:** See how much your child has grown in the time since your last visit and talk with your doctor about your child's development. You can discuss your child's milestones, social behaviors and learning.
- **A way to raise concerns:** Make a list of topics you want to talk about

with your child's pediatrician such as development, behavior, sleep, eating or getting along with other family members. Bring your top three to five questions or concerns with you to talk with your pediatrician at the start of the visit.

– Team approach: Regular visits create strong, trustworthy relationships among pediatrician, parent and child. The AAP recommends well-child visits as a way for pediatricians and parents to serve the needs of children. This [team approach](#) helps develop optimal physical, mental and social health of a child.

Pediatricians have many tools to assess your [children's](#) progress and help them reach their full potential.

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Citation: Ask the Pediatrician: Shouldn't my 1-year-old baby be talking by now? (2021, April 6) retrieved 3 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-pediatrician-shouldnt-year-old-baby.html>

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