Patient Information

Cleft.NET.East
Speech & Language Therapy

First babble advice

This leaflet is for parents/guardians of babies born with a cleft palate (+/-cleft lip) before their baby’s palate is repaired. It will be given following the first meeting with the Cleft.Net.East speech and language therapy team

What this leaflet contains:

- Role of the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).
- Babble development - what you can expect from your baby’s babble development and what you can do to support this.
- The importance of hearing.
- Useful links.
- Next appointment.

Role of the SLT

- Our aim is to promote the development of normal speech by school entry.
- We will continue to review progress after your baby’s palate repair.
- We monitor the outcome of your baby’s palate repair through their speech progress.
- We monitor babble and speech development (how your baby learns to make sounds) and offer advice for ideas to try at home.
- Key review points will be at 18 months, 3 years and 5 years.
- If at any of these stages more regular input is recommended, we will offer specialist speech therapy sessions or other referral as needed.
- You might be seen either at the cleft centre (Addenbrooke’s) or more locally depending on your child’s need and where you live.

Babble development

- The palate’s function is to close the nose off from the mouth during speech and eating.
- Most sounds in English require the palate to close, except for “m, n, ng” which are directed through the nose.
- Although it seems early, now is an ideal time to lay the foundations for speech because your baby is naturally of an age where they are really interested in faces, and not yet moving around. It is also an opportunity to support your baby’s early general communication development.
- Making sounds for your baby to see and hear through babble play is a really good way of doing this.
Ideas to try at home include:

1. Copy sounds your baby makes and take turns in babble play.
2. Making sounds visual (e.g. by modelling soft 'lips together' sounds “p, b, m" and ‘floppy tongue’/ tongue visible between your teeth “t, d, n, thhh”).
3. Keeping the sounds you make soft and gentle, rather than loud.

Hearing

- We discussed the importance of hearing for speech and language development, and the increased risk of changes in hearing associated with ‘glue ear’.
- We will continue to help you monitor this as your baby’s babble, speech and language develops, and will liaise with our colleagues in audiology as needed.

Useful tips to remember at home include:

1. Making sounds closer rather than louder.
2. Reducing background noise for certain times of the day (e.g. by turning TV/radio off).
3. Prioritising face-face times during babble play (e.g. nappy changing).
4. Be aware of the hearing environment – be in your quietest room; play on a carpet/rug if possible.

What happens next?

At your baby’s next appointment we will be listening to the types of sounds they are making. It is not uncommon for babies to be less chatty in the clinic environment, so if possible, it can be helpful to bring a video on your phone of them babbling or “chatting” at home. This is a useful way of enabling us to hear the typical sounds your baby makes when they are relaxed and confident.

Your baby’s next review with the SLT team will usually be when you attend for their post-op check at the multidisciplinary cleft clinic. This usually takes place six to eight weeks following palate repair.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions before your next appointment.

SLT you saw today: ____________________________________________

SLT team contact number: _______________________________________
Specific information from today’s appointment:

Useful Links

- The Spires Cleft Centre have produced a useful video called “Show Me A Sound”, which demonstrates early babble activities that you can use with your baby. This can be viewed on You Tube via the following link: https://youtu.be/UHPDrW_05HE
- The South Wales Cleft Team have also produced a useful video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSXAV47sMtc
- The following website is also a useful resource, with tips and ideas to help support language development: www.talkingpoint.org.uk
Contacts/further information

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Other formats:
If you would like this information in another language or audio, please contact Interpreting services on telephone: 01223 256998, or email: interpreting@addenbrookes.nhs.uk For Large Print information please contact the patient information team: patient.info@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Document history
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Contact number 01223 596272
Publish/Review date October 2019/October 2022
File name First_babble_advice.doc
Version number/Ref 1/101348