

Speech Development in Children with Cleft Lip/Palate

How parents can help with babbling

Babies and toddlers enjoy making 'silly' sounds which, as well as being good fun, also help to give experience of using the tongue, lips and palate, and are a good 'warm up' for speech sounds. Make the sounds so your child can see them and then just let them take them in – they'll just enjoy watching and listening at first. Your child may not imitate initially – you are encouraging watching and listening skills.

Here are some suggestions:

- ⇒ Making raspberries
- ⇒ Kissing / lip smacking
- ⇒ "brrrbrrr" noises while pushing along a toy car
- ⇒ Fish noises – opening and shutting your lips; this is also good for encouraging lip closure
- ⇒ "la la" – flicking your tongue in and out of your mouth and making a noise
- ⇒ Blowing out your cheeks and then gently 'pop' them with your fingers, making a gentle 'p' sound
- ⇒ Animal noises – 'baa', 'moo', 'woof', 'miaow' etc.
- ⇒ "shhh" sound when pretending to go to sleep
- ⇒ "ch" train sound "d" sound – make this sound while doing an activity such as tapping with your finger, climbing the stairs, knocking on the door
- ⇒ "oo" sounds, "ah" sounds when cuddling,
- ⇒ "oh" sounds for 'oh dear!'
- ⇒ "th" sounds – let the air out of a balloon and make this sound at the same time
- ⇒ Introduce play activities with specific associated sounds, such as "b-b-b" bouncing or rolling a ball; "d-d-d" beating on a drum; "sssss" wiggling a snake

All the sounds listed above are made at the front of the mouth and these are the sounds we want to encourage rather than any 'growly' sounds at the back of the mouth. Do not copy or reinforce any sounds made right at the back of the mouth. Babble back a more acceptable sound, such as mama, dada, baba.