The St. Alexius Medical Center Speech Language Pathology Department would like to provide you with information regarding your child’s early language development.

What Is Communication?
Communication includes language (understanding what is being spoken, reading, writing, and talking), speech (articulation, voice, fluency/stuttering) and hearing abilities. This handout will educate you on the language component of communication.

What Is Language?
Language is a system of symbols and codes used in communication. It is the rules we learn in order to communicate our wants, needs, and dreams. Examples of language include: gestures, reading, writing, and speaking.

What Should My Child Be Doing?
*Remember that children are individuals and develop at different rates. What is important is that your child shows continuous language growth and development.

The following list is not all inclusive, but gives general milestones for each age range, up to three years. Language skills do continue to grow after three years of age, especially language needed to perform adequately in academic and social environments. Sources do vary as to when certain milestones are met, however, if your child is not doing three or more of the items in his/her age range, please visit with your family physician or a speech-language pathologist.

**Birth to 3 months**

**Receptive Language (Understanding)**
- Responds to sounds.
- Smiles and/or verbalizes when spoken to.
- Quiets to familiar voices.

**Expressive Language (Talking)**
- Coos (prolonged vowels in a sing song manner).
- Different cries (hunger, attention).
- Makes gurgling sounds.

**3 to 6 months**

**Receptive Language (Understanding)**
- Searches for speaker and sounds.
- Frightened or upset by angry voices & smiles with friendly voices.
- Localizes/searches for and responds to sounds.
- Anticipates feeding at the sight of a bottle.

**Expressive Language (Talking)**
- Vocal turn-taking.
- Hand, nonspeech, and vocal imitation.
- Produces raspberries and sound play.
- Early lip and tongue sounds-p, m, b, and d.

**6 to 9 months**

**Receptive Language (Understanding)**
- Follows simple commands like ‘sit down, come here, give it’.
- Recognizes and looks at common objects, pets, and people when named.
- Participates in games like peek-a-boo and patty-cake.

**Expressive Language (Talking)**
- Uses jargon with inflection and pauses.
- Says mama, dada, bye-bye, no.
- Imitates speech and animals sounds.
- Says 1 word at 9 months, 2 words at 10 months, 3 words at 11 months, 4 words at 12 months, and 3 words other than mama and dada at 13 months.

**9 to 12 months**

**Receptive Language (Understanding)**
- Follows simple commands like ‘sit down, come here, give it’.
- Recognizes and looks at common objects, pets, and people when named.
- Participates in games like peek-a-boo and patty-cake.

**Expressive Language (Talking)**
- Uses jargon with inflection and pauses.
- Says mama, dada, bye-bye, no.
- Imitates speech and animals sounds.
- Says 1 word at 9 months, 2 words at 10 months, 3 words at 11 months, 4 words at 12 months, and 3 words other than mama and dada at 13 months.

**12 to 15 months**

**Receptive Language (Understanding)**
- Understands and identifies two words/objects in the following categories: toys, family members, clothing.
- Attends to a book or toy for 2 minutes and can identify common objects in the book.
- Identifies 1-3 body parts.
- Enjoys music, social games, and finger plays.

**Expressive Language (Talking)**
- Says 5+ true words, 7+ by 15 months (some sources indicate 10-19 words, e.g., all done, more).
- Uses jargon and true words when talking.
- Uses gestures and vocalizations to express wants and needs.

**15 to 18 months**

**Receptive Language (Understanding)**
- Identifies 4-6 body parts or clothing items on a doll, self, or adult.
- Follows 2 step commands (e.g., get the baby and put it in the bed).
- Understands 30 words.

**Expressive Language (Talking)**
- Says 15+ words with specific meaning (some sources say 20-29 words by 18 months).
- Repeats words overheard.
- 3-4 new words each month.
- Starting to use words rather than gestures.
- 50% of utterances are nouns; omits final consonants in words, e.g., ba for ball or no for more.
18 to 21 months
Receptive Language (Understanding)
• Understands and identifies two words in the following categories: family, friends, things outdoors, descriptive words (hot), household items, pronouns, and places.
• Understands verbs in sentences (eat, drink, sleep).
• Understands more complex sentences (e.g., After daddy gets home, we will call grandma).

Expressive Language (Talking)
• Imitates words heard at the end of sentences and 2-3 words phrases.
• Speaking vocabulary of 20+ words.
• Starts to use 2-word phrases.
• Uses ‘no’ and one pronoun (my, mine, me, you).
• Says ‘hi’.

21 to 24 months
Receptive Language (Understanding)
• Understands 300 words and is learning new words daily.
• Follows new, less routine commands.
• Easily points to body parts.

Expressive Language (Talking)
• Uses 30-50 words of specific meaning at 21 months and more than 50 words at 24 months.
• Uses 2-word phrases the majority of the time and 3-word phrases some of the time.
• Knows and says full name.
• Talks about recent experiences.
• Uses plural by adding ‘s’.

24 to 27 months
Receptive Language (Understanding)
• Identifies objects by their use-drink out of, sleep in, sit on, eat with.
• Knows difference between big/little, in/ on, one/all, give/don’t give.
• Understands the quantity of ‘one’.

Expressive Language (Talking)
• Uses 3-words statements (27 months).
• Asks for help with personal needs (washing hands, getting a drink).
• Recites portions of nursery rhymes and songs.
• Uses a question inflection.

27 to 30 months
Receptive Language (Understanding)
• Points to picture when given a function of the object (e.g., point to the one that meows).
• Identifies colors.
• Understands part/whole relationships (e.g., point to the tail of the cat).

Expressive Language (Talking)
• Names 1 color.
• Names pictures in respond to a question.
• Answers what, where, and yes/no questions.
• Uses verb + ing (eating, sleeping, crying).
• Uses the past tense (talked).

30 to 33 months
Receptive Language (Understanding)
• Fully understands the concepts of ‘one’ and ‘all’.
• Understands descriptive concepts like heavy, empty, same.
• Groups objects (animals, cars, food).

Expressive Language (Talking)
• Uses plurals (cats, cookies), consistently.
• Uses prepositions (in, on, under).
• Gives gender.
• Tells how an object is used and about what he/she has drawn.

33 to 36 months
Receptive Language (Understanding)
• Completes 3-step commands.
• Wants to know why and how things work.
• Responds to why and when questions.

Expressive Language (Talking)
• Talks in 4-5 word sentences.
• Uses plurals other than by adding ‘s’ (feet).
• Uses negatives other than ‘no’ (never, won’t, can’t).
• Starting to count.

What Can I Do To Help My Child?
• TALK to and with your child. Describe what you or your child is doing. Use simple language. Supplement your output with gestures and/or objects.
• PLAY with your child. Model play and play routines. Pretend. Follow your child’s lead. Children learn best through play.
• READ to your child. Describe the pictures in books and ask simple questions about the pictures or the story.
• HAVE FUN WITH YOUR CHILD!

What Do I Do If I Have More Questions?
Visit with your Doctor or call us at 530-8200.

References:
http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/child_hear_talk.htm?print=1 How Does Your Child Hear and Talk?
SEED Speech and Language Development Profile

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