



COMMUNICATION MILESTONES

Birth - 6 months

birth - 3 months

Summary Skills:

- * Brief visual contact during feeding and quiet play moments, cry diminishes with adult eye contact
- * Smiles in response to adult face or voice
- * Attends to voices of others
- * Vocalizes to express happiness/joy
- * Vocalizes two different sounds, including sounds made in the back of the throat /k/ and /g/

Red Flags

- ▶ No vocalizing sounds
- ▶ No eye contact during feeding or play
- ▶ No smiles or attempt to imitate facial expressions

Communication & Play

Playing at this level should include a lot of slowly paced, purposeful interaction. Use bath time, diaper changes and feeding as opportunities to engage and interact. Sing softly. Smile. Make simple facial expressions like pursed lips for kisses. Pause often. Wait for their "turn" which could be visual connection, full body movements/wiggles or their own voicing to continue to play. Do this from all positions including during tummy time, laying on back, belly and sides. Show them that they are initiating the communication and that communication gives them power and control over their environment.



Skills Checklist

- ☐ Brief visual contact during feeding & play
- ☐ Able to regulate after being startled
- ☐ Starting to imitate facial expressions
- ☐ Starting to imitate and respond to smiles to familiar caregivers
- ☐ Pauses to listen for adult voice
- ☐ Takes their "turn" with eye gaze or full body movements
- ☐ Enjoys caregivers voice & singing
- ☐ Turns head toward direction of sounds
- ☐ Vocalizes at least two different sounds including back sounds /k/ and /g/
- ☐ Attends to speakers mouth and eyes
- ☐ Can discriminate between harsh and soothing voices

Coming Soon

- ▶ Recognizes name
- ▶ Anticipates feeding
- ▶ More differentiation of sounds
- ▶ Turn taking with voice
- ▶ Laughing

3-6 months

Summary Skills:

- * Laughs
- * Babbles with reduplicated syllable
- * Initiates voice with a listener
- * Anticipates feeding with excitement
- * Recognizes own name
- * Stops when told "no" some of the time
- * Imitates facial expressions
- * Bangs objects and will imitate caregiver

Red Flags

- ▶ Does not imitate facial expressions
- ▶ Limited or no vocalizations
- ▶ Does not visually engage during interactions
- ▶ Does not initiate communication
- ▶ Cries not differentiated

Communication & Play

Playing at this level should include more affect, facial expressions and gestures from the adult. Babies enjoy smiling in a mirror, reaching and banging objects and having their caregiver take "their turn" doing the same. They are learning to be a communicator and initiate with others. Cause and effect toys can be fun to give them opportunities to be independent and solve "little problems".



Skills Checklist

- ☐ Laughs
- ☐ Babbles using same syllable
- ☐ Babbles when alone
- ☐ Starts to differentiate cries of hunger, protest and attention
- ☐ Mouths objects and their own hands
- ☐ Recognizes own name (closer to 6 months)
- ☐ Stops actions when hearing voices
- ☐ Vocal turn taking begins
- ☐ Starting to demonstrate vocalizing for initiation of play and interaction
- ☐ Maintains visual connection during play
- ☐ More attention eyes and mouth of speaker when listening

Coming Soon

- ▶ Separation anxiety
- ▶ Gestures for protest and attention
- ▶ Less mouthing of toys
- ▶ Differentiating more sounds

**Family Tree
Therapies**



COMMUNICATION MILESTONES

6-12 months

6 - 9 months

Summary Skills:

- * Share attention with an adult for 10-30 seconds with or without a toy
- * Use simple gestures
- * Stop making sounds to "listen"
- * Imitating sounds
- * Differentiation of vowel sounds
- * Respond to a sound not visible
- * Vocalize in response to games (Peek a Boo)

Red Flags

- ▶ Limited gestural use
- ▶ Lack of imitation of gestures or sounds
- ▶ Lack of vision directed toward objects or people being referenced
- ▶ Lack of smiling or differentiated affect

Functional Play and Toy Ideas

Playing at this level should include games with simple patterns like peek-a-boo or songs with rhythm and gestures (itsy bitsy spider). You should be pointing and using gestures to direct their vision to toys or items you are naming in their environment. Wait time for their "turn" whether it is visual contact, a smile, a gesture or a vocalization is very important. Teach them that they have an effect on their environment as a communicator.



Skills Checklist

- ☐ Begins showing interest in objects, reaching, pointing and using gestures
- ☐ Uses lips and tongue to make differing sounds: b, p, m, t, d, k, g
- ☐ Baby duplicates sounds (da, da, da)
- ☐ Baby starting to show more awareness of "strangers" and checks in with familiar adults before interacting
- ☐ Speech and gesture games are being played
- ☐ Baby starts to "sing" with parents/caregivers
- ☐ Baby vocalizes or raises voice to get attention or protest
- ☐ Interests in objects/toys in their environment increases significantly
- ☐ Reaches, points, uses things gesturally, i.e. putting phone to ear

Coming Soon

- ▶ First words & sound combinations
- ▶ Answers questions with gestures
- ▶ Playing early games
- ▶ Increased interest in books

9 - 12 months

Summary Skills:

- * Starting to hear first words and combining vowels and consonants (like "ba")
- * Attempts to name objects or toys
- * Participates in songs and rhymes
- * Uses appropriate gestures for wants and needs
- * Plays early games

Red Flags

- ▶ Lacking imitation of words
- ▶ Limited verbal expression
- ▶ Limited engagement in games and songs
- ▶ Reduced interest in books
- ▶ Reduced gestural communication

Functional Play and Toy Ideas

Playing at this level should include simple games that include rhymes, books and songs. Music and rhythm is especially engaging. Encourage wait time and imitation of words. Continue to encourage visual engagement with people and concepts via pointing and use of your own eye gaze.



Skills Checklist

- ☐ First words have meaning (mama, dada, bye, go, no)
- ☐ Uses different "functions" of language like protest, greet, request
- ☐ Baby will "call" to caregivers and return their call as well
- ☐ Baby will attempt to communicate for longer periods of time (one minute or longer)
- ☐ Baby will imitate new words
- ☐ Baby can answer simple WH questions with pointing or vocalization
- ☐ Responds to "show me" with objects and a few basic body parts
- ☐ Demonstrates understanding of "more" and "all done"

Coming Soon

- ▶ Conversational jargon
- ▶ Baby says words not from imitation and not heard before
- ▶ Variety of gestures
- ▶ Variety of syllables

**Family Tree
Therapies**



ORAL MOTOR & FEEDING MILESTONES

Birth - 6 months

Birth - 3 months

Summary Skills:

- * Nasal breathing pattern at rest
- * Organized suck-swallow-breathe pattern
- * Rooting reflex present
- * Adequate lip seal on nipple
- * Tongue/jaw work together to take milk/formula
- * Baby eats in a relaxed, flexed position with chin slightly tilted down

Red Flags

- ▶ Mouth breathing at rest
- ▶ Poor latch
- ▶ Fussy while eating
- ▶ Shallow suck/clicking noises
- ▶ Excessive drooling
- ▶ Coughing or choking

Feeding Time!

Feeding your baby should be done in a relaxed manner as much as possible. Guiding their body into a flexed position and encouraging them to find their pace with sucking, swallowing and breathing. If you are nursing, this will be discovered by the baby. If you are bottle feeding, you may need to “pace” the feeding so that there are suck bursts, followed by lowering the nipple (don’t break the latch) and allowing breath and allowing baby to initiate the suck as ready.

Skills Checklist

- ☐ Nasal breathing pattern - tongue inside mouth, lips closed at rest
- ☐ Organized suck-swallow-breathe on nipple
- ☐ Adequate latch on bottle or breast
- ☐ Lips sealed while sucking - not “losing” a lot of fluid out sides of mouth
- ☐ No coughing or choking during eating
- ☐ Breathing is even and relaxed while eating
- ☐ Baby comfortable in flexed position
- ☐ Fading pacifier dependence by 2 months
- ☐ Pacifier shape should be rounded and similar to shape of the nipple
- ☐ Improving head control helping to stabilize jaw for introduction of solids
- ☐ Choose rounded nipples rather than orthodontic

Coming Soon

- ▶ More mature sucking pattern
- ▶ Introduction of solids
- ▶ Tongue making differing sounds
- ▶ Mouthing of toys increases

3-6 months

Summary Skills:

- * More mature sucking pattern, can suck from a spoon
- * Tongue may protrude slightly when swallowing solids
- * Spoon presented horizontally and lips lightly close to “suck” puree initially from spoon.
- * Increased lip and cheek activity while sucking

Red Flags

- ▶ Open mouth resting posture
- ▶ Rooting reflex remains at 6 months
- ▶ Coughing or choking
- ▶ Excessive drooling
- ▶ Limited lip movement to retrieve from spoon

Feeding Time!

Feeding baby as they get older will require greater stabilization throughout their body. When presenting solids, their feet/legs need to be on a firm surface, not dangling. The need to be able to hold their head up independently. Let them explore textures and introduce chewing on orally appropriate toys.

Skills Checklist

- ☐ Closed mouth resting posture
- ☐ Can take puree from a spoon
- ☐ Starting to use lips and tongue to make differing sounds: b, p, m, t, d, k, g
- ☐ Babbling with reduplicated syllables
- ☐ Interested and anticipates food with excitement
- ☐ Reaches for food
- ☐ Increased differentiation of cheek and lip muscles - improved tone and use of those muscles
- ☐ Weaned from pacifier completely
- ☐ Showing anticipation for receiving food
- ☐ Munching pattern emerges
- ☐ Enjoys mouthing toys
- ☐ Can bring toys to midline to chew

Coming Soon

- ▶ Many different sounds emerging using tongue in front, mid and back of mouth
- ▶ Offering puree and soft solids

**Family Tree
Therapies**



ORAL MOTOR & FEEDING MILESTONES

6-12 months

6 - 9 months

Summary Skills:

- * Learning to drink from open top cup
- * Puree mastered, soft solids introduced
- * Baby can pick up food and hold for bite
- * Increased rotary chew
- * Tongue beginning to move side to side, not just open and down
- * Can make sounds with lips and tongue

Red Flags

- ▶ Ongoing pacifier dependence
- ▶ Coughing or choking on any consistency
- ▶ Biting utensils and unable to use lips to suck or take bites from spoon
- ▶ Drooling

Mealtime!

Meal time at this stage should be done in a seated, well supported position. Baby's feet should rest flat on a surface while seated. Spoons offered should be soft, flexible and somewhat flat in shape (not a deep bowl or groove that would promote biting). Teaching drinking from open top - use a cup with an insert to control the flow rate and a recessed lid. Use straws that are short (no biting) and always supervise and offer small sips only. Sips cups with soft or hard "spouts" should be avoided.

Skills Checklist

- ☐ Feeds self meltable, soft food
- ☐ Tongue moves side to side with more precision
- ☐ Holds and drinks from bottle
- ☐ Uses arms in games such as "So Big", "Peek a Boo" and "Patty Cake"
- ☐ Can hold food to bite and self feed soft solids from own hand
- ☐ Racks cheerios, scooping with several fingers
- ☐ Chewing moving from munch to rotary
- ☐ Begins showing interest in objects, reaching, pointing, using gestures.
- ☐ Using lips and tongue to make differing sounds: b, p, m, t, d, k, g

Coming Soon

- ▶ Mouth opening matches bite size
- ▶ Continuous sucks or drinks seen from cup

9 - 12 months

Summary Skills:

- * Rotary jaw movement while chewing
- * Can pick up small pieces with finger and thumb
- * More continuous sucks or drinks from cup with ease
- * Holds own spoon
- * Enjoys a variety of texture and flavors

Red Flags

- ▶ Showing aversion to solid foods
- ▶ Ongoing pacifier use
- ▶ Coughing or choking
- ▶ Drooling
- ▶ Wide jaw movements and for bites

Mealtime!

Meal time at this stage should be done in a seated, well supported position. Baby's feet should rest flat on a surface while seated. Baby should enjoy a variety of flavors and textures. Baby should eat with utensils and use them appropriately without having to bite spoon or straw most of the time.

Skills Checklist

- ☐ Enjoys eating a variety of tastes and textures
- ☐ Rotary chew with no consistent loss out of mouth
- ☐ Dry face, no drooling
- ☐ No pacifier use
- ☐ Can move food from center to side of mouth for chewing without using fingers
- ☐ Eats a "regular diet" with using fingers and utensils (modified)
- ☐ Can drink from an open top cup with a little support
- ☐ Can use a straw
- ☐ No suckling on straw, don't see tongue coming out to suckle or cup the straw

Coming Soon

- ▶ Putting food in a bowl
- ▶ Lip closure during swallow
- ▶ Can hold cup with handles while drinking

**Family Tree
Therapies**