

# LIGHT



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## Newsletter 29

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&

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Blind and Visually Impaired

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World Health  
Organization

Collaborating Centre for  
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## Head Start Series - 3 Communication

Communication is fundamental for learning and social development. The ability to use speech and language to convey thoughts, opinions and ideas to others is a unique human skill. The process of communication begins very early, much earlier than when a child begins to speak. Children begin communicating right from the stage of infancy, regardless of their disability. Cries, gurgles, laughs, lip smacks, and babbles are basic forms of communication, which later develop into a language system that can be either verbal or non-verbal. The little ways of expressing our feelings such as hugging, kissing, touching, eye contact, body postures, gestures and facial expressions are all part of the communication process.

Vision plays an important role in developing communication skills; hence visual impairment increases the risk of developing communication disorders, especially in case of eye diseases such as Neurological Visual Impairment and Retinopathy of Prematurity. A communication disorder is a persistent difficulty in the understanding and/or use of the spoken or written language.

Communication disorders are generally classified into articulation, fluency, voice and language disorders.

**Articulation:** Difficulties in producing sounds in syllables or saying words incorrectly.

**Fluency:** Stuttering, in which the flow of speech is interrupted by abnormal stoppages, repetitions (eg. to-to-to-today) or prolonging sounds and syllables (eg. bbbbbbball).

**Voice :** Problems with the pitch, volume or quality of the voice that distract listeners from what's being said.

**Receptive Language:** Difficulties in understanding or processing language.

**Expressive Language:** Difficulties in putting words together, limited vocabulary or inability to use language in a socially appropriate way.

The most crucial period of speech and language development for human beings is during the first three years of life, a period when the brain is developing and maturing. Children who have speech and language impairment need immediate referral to a speech therapist as early intervention has a favorable impact on the patterns of speech and language development.

Here are some of the developmental milestones for speech and language. The checklist and activity list are guidelines for professionals, parents and caregivers to help identify children at risk for communication development and initiate early intervention.

## Developmental milestones and activities to enhance communication skills

### Birth to 3 months

- Responding to speech by looking at the speaker.
- Responding differently to the voice of a parent than to other voices.
- Reacting to changes in a speaker's tone, pitch, volume, and intonation.
- Responding differently to the native tongue and another language.
- Communicating with body movements by crying, babbling, and laughing.
- Attempting to imitate sounds.

### Activities

- Call the baby by name when in a lying down position until the baby turns his/her head towards the sound. Check response to sounds. Repeat from the other side.
- Shake a rattle or show a musical toy on either side of the baby until he/she responds to the sound. This helps the child to learn to localize sound.
- Hold the baby close to your face when you talk.
- Talk to the baby about what is being done while it is happening.

### 3 – 6 months

- Exchanging sounds, facial expressions or gestures with a parent.
- Listening to conversations.
- Cooing and crying for attention.
- A different cry when hungry.
- Repeating some vowel and consonant sounds.

### Activities

- Mirrors are wonderful tools at this age. Sit in front of a mirror with your baby, so that your baby can look into it. Use 'Parentese' (baby talk) and ask, "Who is that baby?".... Wave at the baby or make faces and see how she laughs and enjoys this. (Applicable for children with low vision)
- Mimic the sounds your baby makes. This encourages more vocalization. These are the sounds that will turn into words.
- If your baby begins forming words, take these words and elaborate on them. For example, if the baby says "Mama", you might say, "Yes, I'm your mummy". This is the beginning of a conversation.



### 6 months – 1 year

- Beginning repetitive babbling.
- Associating gestures with simple words and two-word phrases, like "hi" and "bye-bye".
- Using vocal and non-vocal communication to express interest and influence others.
- Understanding the names of familiar people and objects.
- Saying a few words.
- Laughs and may imitates others' sounds.

### Activities

- Expose your baby to a variety of sounds like buzzes, humming, sirens, cough, clicking your tongue, or even popping your cheek. This encourages children to explore their tongue and mouth and what it can do.
- Songs, movement and musical games are great at this age.
- Sing songs, nursery rhymes, and anything with hand movements. Use different pitches with your voice and different intensities to show what all can be done with your voice and to emphasize different concepts.
- Read books with short sentences and simple illustrations.
- Play outside. Name each thing the baby is interested in and talk about it.

### 1 – 2 years

- Understanding many words, as well as simple phrases and directions ("Drink your juice").
- Nodding "yes" and shaking head for "no".
- Enjoys rhythm and likes to "dance" to music.
- Saying some 2-word sentences such as "more milk", "all gone", "let's go".

- Asks for a cookie or toy.
- Understanding "Where is mummy/daddy?"
- Understanding simple directions "Get your clothes, give me".
- Understanding more words than they can speak/say.

### Activities

- Children at this age begin to understand simple questions. Eg: While in the kitchen, cooking dinner or at dinner time, ask questions like "Where is the spoon?".
- Your child should be able to recognize those body parts you have been teaching her.

### 2 years – 3 years

- Joining familiar words into phrases.
- Beginning to use adverbs and adjectives.
- Pointing to common objects when they are named.
- Naming objects based on their description.
- Responding to "what?" and "where?" questions.
- Enjoying listening to stories and asking for favorite stories.
- Recounting events that happened that day.
- Following simple directions.
- Answering simple questions, e.g., "What's your name?" or "Which is the big doll?"
- Can put a toy "in", "on", "under" when asked.
- Answering simple questions about objects.

### Activities:

- Begin to identify pictures instead of the actual object (i.e., ball, cup, spoon, etc). You can ask him/her to identify them. Try matching two pictures that are alike and identify the different ones (useful for low vision children).
- Expose the child to different surroundings and the vocabulary that would be useful to them. Take walks, go shopping, plant a garden, have a picnic, clean the house or yard together, etc.
- Talk about new situations before they happen, and after they have happened.
- Encourage imitating sounds of objects and animals. Bark like dogs, chirp like birds or make a fire engine sound, etc.
- Ask many questions to stimulate thought and language.
- At this age, the child should be able to remember two digits or letters. Playing memory games will help the children develop communication.

Source: [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org), [www.blankees.com](http://www.blankees.com)

### Important resources for information on speech and language:

1. Reach Out and Teach: Meeting the Training Needs of Parents of Visually and Multiply Handicapped Young Children – By Kay Alicyn Ferrell, published by the American Foundation for the Blind.
2. All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore, Karnataka, India. [www.aiishmysore.com](http://www.aiishmysore.com).



## NEWS & EVENTS

### Integrated summer program 2009

The integrated summer program 2009 for visually challenged children and their sighted siblings was a grand success (May 18-30, 2009). A total of 35 children, between 5 and 15 years of age, took part in the program organized by the Dr PRK Prasad Centre for Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired. They learnt yoga, arts and crafts, danced and sang, played games, and improved their skills at general knowledge and elocution. They went on field trips to Jersey Dairy milk packaging plant and Radio Mirchi studio.

The children enjoyed interacting with other children and staff members from all departments of the Institute. The program offered the children an opportunity to showcase their creativity and talent, and enhance their confidence and self-esteem, through social interaction. All the children received certificates, prizes and special gifts.

### Low vision Awareness Program

The 21<sup>st</sup> Low vision Awareness Program (LAP) was conducted from April 24-26, 2009. A total of 40 participants including ophthalmologists and optometrists from across the country participated. The program was well appreciated.

## ENROL NOW!

### Short-term Fellowship Program in Low Vision Care

**Duration:** 3 months; program begins on January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1 (two per batch).

**Minimum Qualification:** Diploma in Optometry or Master's degree in Ophthalmology – preferably institution-based. Registration is limited to two candidates per program.

**Registration fee:** Indian Rupees 30,000\*.

### Low Vision Awareness Program (LAP)

**Date:** November 20-22, 2009.

**Eligibility:** Ophthalmologists, optometrists and rehabilitation professionals.

**Registration Fee:** Indian Rupees 2,500.

### Short term Fellowship in Educational Rehabilitation

**Duration:** 3 months; program begins in January, April, July and October. (two per batch)

**Eligibility:** Graduates with teaching experience in regular schools or special schools /sponsored candidates from organizations (Intermediate or graduates and above degree holder) without any work experience in the disability field.

**Age Limit:** Not exceeding 35 years (Age relaxation is given for sponsored candidates).

**Registration Fee:** For National Students Rs. 30,000\*, For International Students US \$ 1000\*.

### Short-term Fellowship in Early Intervention

**Duration:** 3 months; program begins on January, April, July and October. (Two per batch)

**Eligibility:**

- Bachelor's or Master's in child development/Rehabilitation Science/sub-specialty areas (OT, PT)/any discipline with one year work experience in the disability field.
- Intermediate passed with 2 years work experience in the disability field.
- Sponsored candidates from organizations (Intermediate passed or graduation and above degree holder) with no work experience in the disability field.

**Age Limit:** Maximum age 35 years (40 years for sponsored candidate).

**Registration Fee:** For National Students Rs. 30,000\*, For International Students US \$ 1000\*.

### One year Fellowship in Vision Rehabilitation

**Eligibility:**

- Bachelor's or Master's degree in any discipline with 1 year work experience in the disability field, or
- Intermediate with 2 years work experience in the disability field, or
- Sponsored candidates from organizations (Intermediate passed or graduation and above degree holder) without work experience in the disability field.

**Academic period:** 12 months (January - December: Two persons per batch).

**Medium of instruction:** English, Telugu (optional for regional students).

**Age Limit:** Maximum age 35 years (Age relaxation for sponsored candidate).

**Registration Fee:** For National Students Rs. 60,000\*, For International Students US \$ 3000\*.

### One month observership in Vision Rehabilitation

**Eligibility:**

- Bachelor's or Master's degree in any discipline with 1 year work experience in the disability field, or Intermediate pass with 2 years work experience in the disability field.

**Program starts on 1<sup>st</sup> of every month.**

**Registration Fee:** Indian Rupees 10,000\*

**\*(Includes boarding and lodging)**

For more information please contact

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