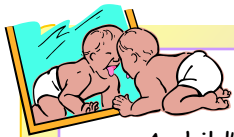




**Greetings!** This newsletter will focus on the most frequently reported concerns from our NICU parents whose infants are now age three, which are speech, motor development, and behavior. At age three toddlers are beginning to develop a sense of self, separate from parents or caregivers. Understanding and respecting this growing independence is a common parental challenge. Literature supports that early learning environments are not about speeding up learning with expensive toys and instructions. Instead it focuses on how adults interact with young children and set up ordinary environments to support and foster early learning.



### Language

A child's overall future success can be improved greatly through early identification of communication disorders. Early identification can prevent the development of behavior problems, difficulties with learning, and problems with social and emotional development.

The **MOST** obvious sign of possible hearing loss is a delay in speech. If you have concerns about your child's ability to communicate have his or her hearing tested. Even if this was done in the newborn period.

Children with mild to moderate hearing loss usually respond to loud sounds and pay attention when people are talking at normal levels but may not have sufficient hearing to detect the less intense sounds in speech especially consonant sounds.

Other signs that you may not associate with hearing loss include: general inattentiveness and or behavior problems.

Parents ask about the effects of being raised in a bilingual home, be reassured that this situation allows the child to learn both languages as if each language were the mother tongue. If the child is experiencing delays the language spoken by all caregivers may be preferred.

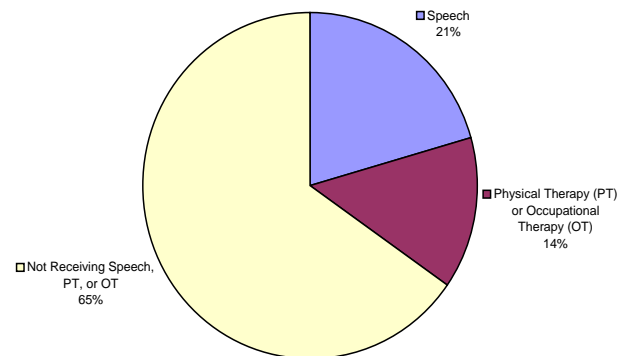


**Parental concerns are highly accurate markers for developmental disability. If a developmental delay is suspected, a child should be referred to early intervention or a developmental specialist for evaluation.**



### Children Born in 2004 - Services Received at Age 3

974 Children Represented in Pie Chart



I've always been amazed at how resilient the babies who come through our NICU are. One of the things we are committed to is ensuring each and every baby receives state of the art care to optimize this resiliency. Your taking a few minutes to complete the NICU follow-up survey form helps not only ensure that your child receives services which s/he may need, but also helps those NICU babies who need our services in the future. Thank you for your help!

~ Patricia R. Chess, MD

By age three, seventy five to eighty percent of your child's speech should be understood by a stranger. Between age three and four they should have a vocabulary of at least 1000 words, use three to four word sentences, tell stories and use "what and where" questions. Although the many and frequent questions may test your patience, they must be responded to in a way that provides not only answers, but validates and reinforces curiosity. Reading aloud and exposure to books prepares a child for the formal teaching and learning of reading, which is essential to language development.

### ***Play is the way a child learns!***

At this age children are testing out new behaviors but still need to be consoled and protected. Parents can help by providing a safe place to explore with encouragement and support. As your child becomes more comfortable in his explorations of time and spaces and new friendships he discovers more about his own self and abilities. So, the more pleasant experiences he has with other children and adults the better prepared he will be for adventures at school.



### **Motor Skills**



**Activities to develop gross motor skills** can include broad jumps, hop scotch, balancing on one foot at a time for shifting weight and balancing practice. Playing toss with a small ball, for eye- hand coordination. Riding a tricycle develops coordination, as well as some independence. A simple obstacle course helps a child learn body coordination in relation to objects around them.

**Fine motor skills** are developed by copying simple shapes, such as crossed lines and circles, using crayons or finger painting. Use blocks for stacking and building bridges, as this develops visual - motor planning and eye-hand coordination. Move on to stringing beads for a necklace or cutting shapes.



### **Techniques to foster good behavior**

- This is the age to notice and praise your child's good behavior. Be specific in what you are praising them for, such as "Wow, you did a good job putting the toys away".
- By noting in a positive way when your child is doing something you like helps teach the child appropriate behavior.
- Model appropriate behavior yourself.
- Three year olds do not like changes and do not adjust quickly. Prepare your child for changes in routine. Discuss upcoming activities and how they should behave.
- When stating behaviors and limits to the child, do so clearly and in a way appropriate for their age. These expectations should be few, realistic, and consistently reinforced.
- Remove or avoid places and objects that contribute to unwanted behavior.
- Consequences should be given out at the time of the negative behavior. For example, bring the child in from playing if she is throwing sand when asked not to.
- Discipline -
  - Should be geared to the child's developmental level.
  - Works best when you take time and try to understand the child's point of view.
  - Should help a child learn from the mistake and the child should know why he is being disciplined.
  - Discipline methods should not cause a child to be afraid of his parents.
  - Should not occur if the parent feels out of control.



**When parents provide predictable and consistent routines, a child learns to anticipate what to expect and to trust his or her environment.**

### ***Suggested websites for parents:***

[www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly)

[www.aboutourkids.org](http://www.aboutourkids.org)

[www.neonatology.com](http://www.neonatology.com)



And don't forget all the great books and resources available to both you and your child at your local public library!