

# Talking with Your Deaf Baby

- Get up close at first. Babies like to see as well as hear and your facial expressions help to emphasise the message you're giving.
- Use eye-to-eye contact. Babies use their eyes to give messages like we do. They will look at a toy and you will say "Oh, do you want your teddy?" giving them the words that link to what they're focused on.
- Talk about lots of things. Your voice communicates your feelings — long before baby understands the words — and lets them know you want to chat and that this is important for both of you. This aids bonding as well as communication.
- Don't worry what you are talking about. It will probably be about feeding and changing and everyday routines — exactly what babies need to hear. Hearing the words which are about what they are experiencing at that precise moment is how all babies gradually come to understand what the words mean. So all that chat about "do you want..., are you hungry..., isn't this a nice bath?" is never wasted. Talking about the same things every day isn't boring for the baby — and it becomes automatic and not really boring for you! The repetition helps understanding and develops a feeling of security. Practice makes perfect.
- Don't talk continuously. Leave spaces to suggest that it is their turn; to let them know you expect a response. You might need to leave a little extra time for the baby to receive and think about the sound. They will begin to respond with noises or movements and you can then respond to those and let them know that you like what they've done.
- Try singing rhymes, silly songs or whatever songs you like currently. They will be rhythmic and tuneful (or tuneful enough!) and just the sort of sounds babies like to listen to. You can sing any song that you enjoy although later it is useful to introduce nursery rhymes, action rhymes and traditional children's songs.

## What's special about talking with a deaf baby?

- Hearing aids pick up the sound closest to them best of all. As your baby is young you are likely to be cuddling them and picking them up and so you will be very close to the microphone. This gives them lots of interesting speech sounds through the aids.
- Being at home is usually quieter than elsewhere because of the carpets and furniture absorbing noise. But it is especially difficult for a deaf baby learning to use the hearing aids and to listen when there's lots of competing background noise — like the TV, radio or washing machine — so make sure that some of your chatting time is in a quiet place.
- Remember you don't need to shout. Just use normal voice levels as the hearing aids will make the sound louder. Use the tuneful, "more rhythmic" voice that we all naturally use when we chat to any baby.