

## General Strategies to help speech development

1. Accept what your child says without criticism but say it back correctly  
E.g. If ball is said as “mall”, try saying “yes, it’s a ball”
2. Listening to you saying the correct sounds is very important
  - the correct sounds may often follow without therapy.

### Other Ideas

Show your child what happens when you blow on their hand or against objects such as feathers/paper. Blow on food to cool it, kiss your hand and ‘blow’ the kiss away. Encourage your child to copy you in a GENTLE relaxed manner. Stop if there is any evidence of tension or forcefulness. (NB: It is not a good idea to give your child musical instruments, such as whistles, or toys they need to blow to make a sound – children naturally want to make the loudest noise possible! This will mean them using forceful blowing which is not a good pattern to encourage.

Therapist .....

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## SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

### ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP SPEECH SOUNDS IN CHILDREN WITH CLEFT LIP/PALATE

Here are some ideas to help encourage lip and tongue movements as well as sounds, which are important for developing speech.

#### General Points

If your child has a cleft palate, before this is repaired, the back of the tongue is likely to be up in the cleft at rest. As a result, the middle and tip of the tongue are not in the normal place. This means the tongue tip is less likely to get lots of sensation from touch. So, when babbling starts to develop, the back of the tongue is likely to be used more than the front and the lips. Sometimes sounds will be made in the throat instead of the mouth.

It helps to have a clear idea of which part of the mouth makes which sounds:

- p b m** - Lips together
- t d n l** - Tongue tip against the gum behind your front teeth
- k g** - The back of the tongue raises up against the back of the palate

Other sounds that occur later include:

**f v s z sh ch j r th**

When you are clear about the normal pattern of sounds, you can encourage these and gently discourage abnormal ones. We tend to unconsciously repeat back what a baby is 'saying' or doing and the baby also mimics what we are doing. So, when you are playing or talking to your child, you can encourage 'good' sounds by using them yourself, e.g. by babbling mama, dada, lala, nana. If your child uses throat sounds, babble back a front sound e.g. Nanna/dada.

Lots of play and 'talking' with each other should encourage 'front' sounds, especially lip and tongue tip ones. Stimulating the lips and tongue tip will encourage 'forward' tongue placement, which is good for your child's speech sound development.

The following activities will help develop awareness of sensation in the mouth as well as encouraging them to experiment with sounds:

### Lip Play

- a) Lip smacking/blowing raspberries/kisses
- b) Encourage 'm' sounds, by using them yourself in play
- c) Encourage 'p' and 'b' e.g. Popping a bubble and saying 'p'
- d) Pull funny faces with your baby; perhaps looking in a mirror or feeling the movements with each other's fingers.  
Demonstrate 'oo', 'ee', 'ah' sounds, which have different lip patterns
- e) Observe whether your child puts their lips around the spoon when eating

### Tongue Play

- a) Imitate your child's tongue movements and encourage the same back (try moving tongue in and out and licking lips)
- b) Put little blobs of food on the outside of their lips and encourage them to lick it off
- c) Encourage 'n', 't' and 'd' sounds e.g. babble 'nanna'
- d) Gently stimulate the tip of your child's tongue and their top gum at the front of their mouth with a very soft toothbrush

### Talking

Encourage 'conversations'. You have a turn and then your child has a turn at 'talking'. Imitate any sounds they make (apart from throat ones).

### Listening

All children have to learn to identify your voice from the vast number of other sounds around them. Unlike us, they cannot 'tune into' one sound, such as someone speaking and ignore all others. Therefore, you need to make this easier for them by **reducing background noise**, such as the television or radio. This is even more important for children with cleft palate, as hearing may be affected too. However, simple strategies can help:

- a) Get on your child's level so they can see your face. Make sure you have your child's eye-contact before speaking (If they are not looking they are probably not listening)
- b) Use a tuneful voice that your child will find interesting
- c) Call their name before speaking to get their attention
- d) Speak clearly and slowly using short sentences

### Activities to help listening

- a) Noise makers – children love things to bang or shake!
- b) Action rhymes and nursery rhymes help children listen and anticipate what happens next, e.g. Round and round the garden'
- c) Go on a 'noise walk' around the house. Draw their attention to noises around them, e.g. Doorbell, ticking clock, birds.