



Introduction

Reading to your baby is a way for you to spend special time together during your stay in the NICU, but also at home. Being in the NICU can be an overwhelming time with unfamiliar sights and sounds, but reading aloud to your baby is something that you can do every day to help your baby well into their future.

Why Should I Read To My Baby?

Reading to babies has been shown to have a lasting effect on language, writing and early reading skills. Research has found that what babies learn when you read with them, and this has an effect four years later when they're about to begin school. Your baby recognises your voice and would rather listen to your voice than any other sound. Sharing books is a way for you to bond with your baby in the NICU. Hearing your voice brings your baby a sense of calm, comfort and familiarity.

Benefits Of Reading To My Baby

Children who have been read to aloud on a regular basis from birth are more likely to readily learn to read once they start school. Reading aloud is an opportunity for you to bond with your baby. Babies learn to talk through hearing sounds, words and stories. The amount of words spoken to premature babies (known as parent talk) is linked to higher language and learning scores at 7 and 18 months corrected age.

What Should I Read?

It doesn't really matter what you read to your baby, hearing your voice is what is important. Some ideas of what to read to your baby are listed below:

- Children's picture books
- Nursery rhymes and actions
- Something from your childhood
- Novels
- Books with bright colours or books in black and white
- Books in your home language
- Touch and feel books
- Lift the flap books
- Tell a story using picture books

When Should I Read To My Baby?

If your baby is awake and making eye contact with you that is the best time to read to them. Sometimes your baby may be sleepy or lethargic due to medications or their illness. It is still ok to read to them during this time but if you're unsure, ask your baby's nurse.

Following Your Baby's Cues

Sometimes listening to reading can be tiring for your baby and you may notice them trying to tell you by looking away, becoming restless or becoming sleepy. That's ok, save the rest of the story for later.

