

To the parents of %baby name%,

Congratulations on your new baby! We are so excited for you to get to know them. You will be one of the most powerful forces shaping your baby’s life.

While babies are in the intensive care unit, it is sometimes difficult for parents to know what they can do to help their baby. While we will care for your baby’s medical needs, your baby still needs you. All of the noises and lights, tube and wires, and constant interruptions can make it difficult to get to know your baby. You may not know whether you can touch your baby or you may feel silly talking to your baby when doctors and nurses are constantly walking in and out.

One of the things you can do better than anyone else on their care team is talk to them or sing to them: let them hear your voice! This allows you to touch your child even when you are not allowed to physically touch your child. You baby knows your voice, even at birth: it can comfort them. Your baby needs to continue to hear words to help with brain and language development.

Sometimes it is hard to know what to say. Books are an easy way to have something to say to your baby. When you baby is very young, your baby won’t know what you are saying, so you can read anything that interests you. Your baby may respond to hearing your voice by relaxing, or making little noises while you talk, or might just fall asleep! You might not notice anything, but don’t be discouraged, hearing your voice is still helpful. A good time to sing, talk, and read is when your baby is awake but quiet; it is OK to read while your baby sleeps too. Hold your baby if you can, but if not, it is also good to read while your baby is in a crib or through the portholes of the incubator. As your baby gets older, stop to notice what your baby is looking at, point at picture and describe what your baby sees, make noises to go along with the story. Some books don’t even have words! You make up your own.

Enjoy spending time reading with your baby, and know that your voice is a powerful force in your baby’s development.

Regards,

The Pediatric Heart Care Team

At American Family Children’s Hospital