

Music with your baby

It is important to interact with your baby to promote bonding. If premature, they are missing out on some of the third trimester sounds that include hearing mom and dad's voices and other close family members. Keep in mind that all sounds that babies hear while in the womb are muffled, which protects their newly developed hearing. Their hearing is brand new and particularly sensitive. Outside the womb, babies lack this protection. In fact, sound levels in an isolette can be much louder than in open air!

Why music?

Singing to your baby has many benefits, such as:

- Providing the necessary and appropriate stimulation to support language, cognitive, auditory and social development.
- Relaxing and comforting your baby, especially when the song is repetitive. This can help to regulate your baby's vital signs — such as their heart rate, oxygen saturation and respiration — and allow them to focus their energy on growing.

Suggested lullabies and children's songs:

"The ABC Song"

"Are You Sleeping"

"Baby Bumblebee"

"Bingo"

"Down by the Bay"

"The Farmer in the Dell"

"Five Green Speckled Frogs"

"He's Got the Whole World"

"Hush Little Baby"

"If All the Raindrops"

"If You're Happy and You Know It"

"I'm a Little Teapot"

"Itsy Bitsy Spider"

"London Bridge"

"Looby Loo"

"Mary Had a Little Lamb"

"The Muffin Man"

"Old MacDonald"

"On Top of Old Smokey"

"Peace Like a River"

"Row Row Row Your Boat"

"Shake My Sillies Out"

"Six Little Ducks"

"Skip to My Lou"

"This Old Man"

"Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"

"Wheels on the Bus"

"You Are My Sunshine"

Tips on singing to your baby

Singing to your baby promotes parent-child bonding. Babies love to hear the voices of mom, dad and other close family members. No matter how you think you sound, your baby is loving it! When singing to your baby, keep it:

- **Slow:** Fast-moving music can be easily overwhelming for baby.
- **Soft:** Loud sounds or music with lots of changes can startle a baby or cause overstimulation.
- **Higher in your range:** Babies hear higher pitches better than lower pitches.
- **Smooth:** Move smoothly from note to note.
- **Repetitive:** Even if you are bored, your baby won't be. Babies are soothed by repetition and knowing what's coming up next.
- **No longer than 30 minutes:** Let your baby hear the difference between music and ambient sound.

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Your baby's communication: *learning their unique language*

Although your baby is unable to speak, they will still communicate their needs to you. Learning to recognize their unique language will help to make sure your baby does not become overstimulated.

Overstimulation occurs when a baby can't handle or process what is happening. It may be too noisy, too bright — or the baby just may not want to be held or touched at that time. Many things can overstimulate an infant, and here are the most common signs:

- **Stop hand:** This looks like the baby is saying “stop” or “wait” with their hand. The palm is facing out toward you.
- **Grimace/red face:** The baby looks like they are uncomfortable or about to cry — or their face suddenly gets red or reddish-purple.
- **Crying:** The baby starts to cry.
- **Startle reflex:** The baby's whole body jerks or startles.
- **Tense fingers:** The baby spreads their fingers out, and the fingers are stiff or tense. This can look like a “stop” hand, but the palm may not be facing out. Try gently pushing the fingers toward the palm and see if the baby's hand closes easily. If not, wait until they do.
- **Arched back:** When the baby's back bends backward and the belly is pushed forward, as if the baby is trying to get away from what's in front of them.
- **Hiccups:** Hiccups are not always a sign of overstimulation, but if the baby has the hiccups, it can be very stressful. It's best to wait until the hiccups stop before adding more stimulation.

As your baby grows, they will start to communicate when they are enjoying their experience. You may not see your baby communicate in this way until they are closer to 40 weeks.

Positive responses to look for include when your baby:

- **Faces you:** It seems like your baby is looking at you, even if their eyes are closed, with their head and face turned toward you.
- **Makes eye contact:** Their eyes look at or into your eyes.
- **Smiles:** They smile, even if asleep.
- **Vocalizes:** They use their voice by cooing, “talking,” sighing, etc.
- **Snuggles:** They get closer to you or settle into your arms if you're holding them.

Music myth

You may have heard that classical music is good for babies, but this is false. Orchestral music is far too complex for babies' brains, especially if they are medically fragile or premature. Lullabies are best!

Resources

Sound carts are available in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for rooms to play lullaby music from a Bluetooth speaker. Also, search ACH NICU lullaby playlist — playlist by [Expressive Therapy Center | Spotify](#) for a curated playlist you can play for your infant that includes safe music.

When you sing to your baby, you are helping their brain grow strong and strengthening the bond between you!

For more information or questions, please contact:

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