Newborn Milestones - What to Expect in the First Few Weeks
Article

Talking to Newborns - Tips for Building a Strong Bond

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We spend a lot of time talking to our newborns, from telling them stories to just being completely gaga over everything they do. Research has shown that it is important to start talking to your child as early as possible, and now new exciting research shows that your baby actually understands you when you ask him if he wants his diaper changed or if he's hungry.

The new research found that babies as young as 6 months were able to understand basic words, beyond mommy or daddy. Previously, researchers thought that babies aged 6 to 9 months could react to sounds without actually understanding the meaning of the words. Because babies don't start "talking" or gesturing meaningfully before they're 10 or 11 months old, psychologist felt that understanding words started at around 12 months.

The study consisted of showing pictures of food items and body parts, for example, a banana and a foot, to 6 to 9 months old babies, then asking them simple phrases like "Where's the banana?" A second step consisted of showing the babies complex images, such as an orange on a table, and asking them to find a specific item in the image.

In both instances, babies directed their gaze towards the right item, suggesting that they understood the word associated with the object. They may not be able to respond to your question, by they can understand what you're saying, and that should encourage you to keep on talking to them whenever you can.

Reference:

http://www.livescience.com/18469-infants-understand-words.html