



Early Communication is Important for Children with Down Syndrome

Hello, Parents and Guardians!

We all know that children with Down syndrome may have challenges with eating, or delayed speech and language development due to a variety of physical and/or cognitive factors. This can also positively impact their ability to communicate effectively, leading to frustration, social isolation, and difficulties in learning. Additionally, feeding difficulties – and feeding therapy with a speech-language pathologist - can impact their later speech skills. **Communication evaluation, Speech and Feeding therapy is essential for children with Down syndrome early in life because it can significantly improve their communication skills and overall quality of life later.**

Numerous studies and professional organizations have emphasized the importance of early intervention in speech therapy for children with Down syndrome. Here are some examples of sources that support the need for speech therapy early in life:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA): ASHA recommends that children with Down syndrome receive early intervention services, including speech therapy, as soon as possible after diagnosis. According to ASHA, early intervention can improve communication, cognitive, and social-emotional outcomes.

American Academy of Pediatrics: [AAP recommends](#) that physicians speak with families at both the 0-1 month and 1 year appointments about the importance of speech evaluation and early intervention services (accessed May 2023)

“What type of speech and language evaluation and treatment are needed? During the first year of life, speech and language evaluation and treatment focus on the pre-speech and pre-language skills. Evaluation can determine which skills your child has mastered and which would be best to work on next. Therapy can teach you how to work with your child at home and model how to use play activities (rolling a ball back and forth) and activities of daily living (feeding, bathing) to promote speech and language.” – Excerpt from Dr. Libby Kumin, CCC-SLP, in the *Ages and Stages* information from the National Down Syndrome Congress (accessed May 2023 at ndscenter.org)

With permission from Dr. Libby Kumin, CCC-SLP to DSAmd, we are able to share two attachments: the Pre-speech Recording Form, and the Early Social Interactions form with you.

We encourage you to advocate for an early feeding and speech-language evaluation, and work on the assessment forms together with your practitioner. We hope you can use the findings from these forms to advocate for your loved one with Down syndrome to receive consistent and early intervention if recommended.