

## Language & Learning

### Learning From My Family

#### Experiencing Listening And Music

When you found out that your baby had a hearing loss, did you wonder about music, nursery rhymes, lullabies, and all the singing games that are part of early childhood? Some parents say that they find themselves using less music and singing in their homes than they did before their baby was diagnosed.

In fact, many adults who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing love music. Musical sounds are different than speech. We don't have to understand them or hear all of them in order to enjoy them. Early chances to listen and participate in family music can help build your baby's ability to hear if she uses amplification. You can move to music from the stereo, especially if it has a strong bass line and an interesting rhythm. Some music is slow; some music is fast. Some music is loud, and some is quiet. Music uses high and low sounds and the differences are interesting.

You can make traditional nursery rhymes and word plays accessible by making the room quiet, by checking hearing aids to be sure they are working, and by getting close to your baby. Parents and babies have played with spoken language as part of learning for thousands of years. There are ways to play with American Sign Language as well. Sometimes the word games are different because they are visual, but they are just as much fun. If there are Deaf adults where you live, find out what they do with their children. Deaf and hard of hearing toddlers love to watch sing-along videos of their favorite cartoon characters again and again, moving with the actions on the screen and gradually adding language, especially if you participate.

The important part of a lullaby, especially to young babies, is not the words, but the sound. Close to a mother or father's chest and mouth, a baby with hearing loss can receive vibration and sound combined with a feeling of comfort and protection. At the same time, the baby is learning to listen to those sounds that she can hear.

Babies don't have to hear music in the same way that we do. They can enjoy it, dance to it, relax to it, and produce it in their own way. So get out the pan lids and wooden spoons. Turn up the stereo for dancing, and sing lullabies and nursery rhymes. Have fun with music and early listening.