Reading to Children

One of the most important ways you can help your child learn is by reading to him or her. Children who are read to more often and earlier in life do better in school both academically and socially. Reading to your child can start from the time he or she is a baby and continue throughout childhood. Reading to your child helps to develop many skills, including recognizing letters, remembering stories, and learning words. Pediatricians generally recommend reading to your baby very early in life, before 18 months of age. Ideally, reading should take place at least 3 times a week.

READING ALOUD TO YOUR CHILD

Reading aloud to your child is important in many ways:

- It helps children develop the mental processes of motivation, curiosity, and memory.
- It helps children develop early language skills.
- It provides a time for one-to-one attention and affection, which encourages children to have positive feelings about reading.
- It can help children cope during times of stress or tragedy.

Parents may wonder what the benefits are to reading to very young children who may not be able to sit still for a long book or who may not completely understand the story just yet. It is okay if your child is fidgety or does not understand every book when you start reading; the development of these reading skills takes time. That is why reading early and making it a part of your family life creates a set of shared experiences that are beneficial in both the short and the long term. More research is being done to understand all of the benefits that reading provides for children; this issue of *Archives* includes a study about a reading program.

TIPS FOR MAKE READING A ROUTINE PART OF YOUR FAMILY

- Talk about the pictures in the books. Your child does not need to understand the whole story to enjoy it.
- Show your child the words. Run your finger along the words as you read them.
- Have fun. Animal books often have silly sounding words, so have fun making the sounds.
- Get your child to participate by asking a question about the story, such as "what do you think will happen next?" or "what color is this truck?"
- Use your local library. You can check out and read thousands of free books. Look to see if your library offers story hours or special events.
- Make reading a part of every day; some easy times to consider are before bedtime or on the bus. Even reading to your child for only a few minutes is okay.
- Read books that relate to what your child is experiencing in life, including events like starting preschool, going to the dentist, or moving to a new home.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reach Out and Read
http://www.reachoutandread.org/parents/index.aspx.

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