

Especially for parents of infants! 

Fingerplays and Rhymes for Little Ones

 Rhymes and Sound Awareness

Rhymes and fingerplays are fun ways for infants to learn new sounds and words. Fingerplays and nursery rhymes that infants enjoy can help babies learn to talk.

What is the practice?

Fingerplays and nursery rhymes give babies many opportunities to hear sounds and be part of fun and enjoyable activities. This handout includes ideas for ways to encourage your baby to learn sounds and take part in telling stories.

What does the practice look like?

Long before infants talk, they use gestures and movements to tell us what they want and what makes them happy. Fingerplays and nursery rhymes are enjoyable ways to pair sounds and words with movements. Even made-up fingerplays will get your child to play the game. You can find many different fingerplays searching the Web.



How do you do the practice?

Fingerplays and action rhymes are simple and direct. Find gestures and ways of moving your baby enjoys. Recite nursery rhymes or fingerplays that fit those movements and gestures.

- Start by identifying the movements and gestures your baby makes when touched. Does she like to be tickled? Will she let you pat her hands together like clapping? Does she like having “raspberries” blown on her tummy?
- Be sure your child is in a comfortable position. Lying on her back is often best when first using fingerplays and nursery rhymes with infants. If your child can sit up, that position works well, too.
- Fingerplays and nursery rhymes that involve body parts are easy and fun to do. Play *Pat-a-Cake* by gently patting your child’s palms together and saying the nursery rhyme. *This Little Piggy* is a fun game for infants. Your child will get to see and feel you touch their toes while hearing the silly rhyme. A baby’s first fingerplays and nursery rhymes should be short and repetitive.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child try to make any movements when she hears the nursery rhyme?
- Does your child try to get you to play the game again?
- Does she make sounds more often while hearing the rhymes?

Take a look at more fingerplays and nursery rhymes

Tickled by Jack and Jill

Malik, 5 months old, loves to be tickled when playing games with his mother. Mom lets tickling be the climax of nursery rhymes she sings to Malik. One of Malik's favorites is *Jack and Jill*. As soon as Malik hears the nursery rhyme, he smiles and coos to his mother. Mom uses her fingers like little feet walking from Malik's toes up his legs and across his chest. Then she tickles Malik's neck and says, "And Jill came tumbling after!" She moves her fingers quickly down to the baby's toes again. "Should we do it again?" Malik wiggles all over to tell his mother yes!



Raspberry Pat-a-Cake!

Will, 4 months old, has "happy hands!" He reaches out and touches everything in view. His father has turned reaching into a game of *Pat-a-Cake* with Will. Dad holds his hands out for Will to grab as he reaches toward him. Dad begins the game by saying "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake," while gently patting Will's hands together. When saying "roll it," Dad wraps his hands around Will's hands. When saying "pat it," he takes Will's hands and pats them on his son's tummy. Then he says, "Put it in the oven for Will and me." At the end of the nursery rhyme he blows "raspberries" on Will's tummy. Will loves the game! Now he tries to start games of *Pat-a-Cake* by grabbing anyone's hands and bouncing them!

This Little Piggy

Low vision doesn't stop Mandy from enjoying fingerplays. Eight-month-old Mandy's favorite game is *This Little Piggy*. Her mother only has to mention the game and Mandy starts kicking to say she's ready to play. Mom has turned this nursery rhyme into a special game for Mandy. She grabs and wiggles each of Mandy's toes as she recites the rhyme. When saying, "Wee, wee, wee! All the way home," she tickles the bottoms of Mandy's feet. Mandy kicks and chuckles, and the game begins again!

