

November
2005

Childcare and children's health

An information sheet for parents

Literacy as part of everyday life

Literacy is part of the everyday life of families. Written and spoken words are used to communicate our ideas and feelings and shared meanings. We use literacy as we communicate with family members and friends, do the shopping, cook dinner and participate in leisure activities. Family members play a big role in supporting literacy and learning in children as they go about their daily lives.

In addition to reading books, children need to learn to take meaning from CD-ROMs, videos and computer games. Emails, internet sites and text messaging play a growing role. Sharing books with your child on a regular basis is still very important, but that is just one of many possible literacy experiences. Others include:

- reading and viewing signs, labels and logos — for example street signs, advertisements, food packaging and symbols on clothing
- listening to told stories, rhymes and jokes
- viewing television programs, videos and DVDs
- reading and sending letters, greeting cards, postcards, SMS phone messages and emails
- playing computer games
- looking up information on the internet
- reading and viewing magazines, newspapers and catalogues
- playing card and board games
- drawing and writing using paper and pencils and computer software.



All of these literacy experiences contribute to your child developing an understanding and appreciation for the role of words in their everyday lives. Different experiences will interest and inspire different children, so there are lots of opportunities to encourage your child and support them to develop a love of reading and writing.

Many of the experiences children are having today are different to the ones that we may have had as children. Most children growing up in Australia are surrounded by print and images as well as spoken language.

- *Think about the number of signs and information that is displayed in a shop, or as you travel around your neighbourhood. Try to use these signs and information with your child. Point to the words and the pictures. Talk about what you see.*
- *You may see signs and information in languages other than English. Again talk about these signs, and you can play a game to guess what they may say.*

The advances in technology mean that children are exposed to the written and spoken words in many different formats. Most children in Australia today have some access to computers and electronic equipment. Children can learn about print through family experiences of using the computer and electronic equipment such as looking for information on the Internet, shopping online and playing computer games.

- *Does your child love to help you when you are using the computer? Take this chance to ask questions and share the understanding of what they are seeing and learning.*
- *Does your child ever see you writing or reading an SMS telephone message? Talk about this as being another way of sharing information and why it is important to be able to read and write.*

Share the words, pictures and sounds that are all around you, as they can all contribute to developing the literacy skills in your child.

An initiative of



CENTRE FOR
Community
Child Health



The Royal Children's
Hospital

Johnson & Johnson
PROFESSIONAL & EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
Health Care for Life

Supported by



National Childcare Accreditation Council



Australian Government
Department of Family and
Community Services