

Routines and Children

<http://www.healthlinkalberta.ca/Topic.asp?GUID=%7B139564A3-EF78-422D-AFAA-1A384A5C125E%7D>

Content Review Date: November 2006

Description

Daily routines provide children with information about the world. Since routines are repeated on a regular basis, children have the opportunity to hear the same sequence of events, words, and phrases repeated over and over. The predictability of the routine is comforting to children. Routines present opportunities for the children to learn new words, concepts, and social language skills in a meaningful context.

The vocabulary you use to describe these routines is important for building the language skills of young children. Children learn social conventions and manners during meal routines. They share conversations during diapering and toileting routines. They learn how to take turns during play and at the snack table when serving themselves.

Supporting Learning Through Routines

Here are some strategies you can use to support children as they learn language through routines:

- **Develop and include routines**

Include routines in your programming, whether you feel the children understand them or not. Use words to describe them. Children will eventually understand the specific words. Many times adults do not talk about routines to children, especially babies, because they think the child will not understand the words. But children, especially babies, need to hear the words and phrases to be able to understand them and use them later.

- **Use routines to spend time with each child**

Some routines such as diapering, arrival and greeting, grooming and saying goodbye allow you to spend time with each child individually. Children can follow the sequence of routines more easily when they have your undivided attention. Pay attention to the child, taking turns talking with him. Crouch so you are at eye level with the child, so he can see your mouth and see you saying the words.

- **Repeat words and phrases that describe the routine**

Describe what is happening in the routine by repeating the words and actions in the same way each time. This lets children hear the same words over and over so they begin to imitate you and connect the words with the action. For example, "Pants on" or "I want more, please".

- **Consistency helps children learn to predict**

Repeat the same sequence of events for each routine, so the children can learn to predict what happens next. Predicting is an important concept they will use later to solve problems in math and reading.

- **Let children know what will happen next**

Letting children know what will happen next helps them better understand transitions (going from one activity to another), sequences (the order in which activities occur), and language. For example, use a "transition song" when going outside for a walk. Walking while singing to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle", "We are going walking now, walking now, walking now, we are going walking now", etc. This will help children to move from one activity to another, and to predict what they are supposed to do when they hear the song. They will eventually move to the next activity as soon as they hear the beginning of the song. Use a sequence of pictures to show the order of activities, such as children playing, children washing their hands, and children eating their snack.

- **Provide choices**

Provide consistent choices in your routines so that children have an opportunity to make some of the decisions. This supports independence, sense of self, and their ability to make choices. It also reinforces the importance of using language in an appropriate way to address needs and wants. (Children who aren't talking yet can choose by pointing to or reaching for what they want.)

- **Allow lots of time for each routine**

Ensure you are allowing sufficient time for each routine to occur. Children need time to learn about the routine and the words that describe it. If a routine is too rushed children may have trouble grasping these concepts.

- **Use "waiting time" wisely**

It is not developmentally appropriate to ask very young children to line up for long periods of time while they are waiting to do something or go somewhere. Fill this time with activities. For example, use waiting time to sing a song or read a story, or use the opportunity to play a turn-taking game, or have a conversation with a small group of children. You can often reduce waiting time by breaking a large group of children into 2 smaller groups so those who are ready can start an activity while the others are getting ready to join them.

Copyright & Disclaimer

Reviewed by Alberta clinical experts. Brought to you by HealthLink Alberta. [Copyright](#)

This material is designed for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction and/or treatment. If you have specific questions, please consult your doctor or appropriate health care professional.

The Health Link Alberta website is responsible ONLY for the content that is posted on Your Health. External website links have been reviewed and are credible; however, some information may differ from content on Your Health.

Last Modified: 1/19/2007 4:21:53 PM