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Daily, consistent parental reading in the first year of life improves infants' language scores

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Source: Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine

Summary: Daily reading improved language development in infants 12 months and younger, according to a recent study.

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FULL STORY

Daily reading improved language development in infants 12 months and younger, according to a recent study by researchers at the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine.

The study, which builds on well-established research of early language development in toddlers 12 months and older, found that the infants who received consistent, daily reading of at least one book a day, starting at two weeks of age, demonstrated improved language scores as early as nine months of age. The findings were published in December in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, the official peer-reviewed journal of the American Board of Family Medicine.

During the randomized study, parents/guardians were given a set of 20 children's books specifically chosen to support early language development and interaction with print media. Enrolled families agreed to read at least one book per day and have their infants tested with an expressive and receptive language test at their well-child visits.

"One book each day is an easy goal for new families to try. To see that there is a measurable improvement in speaking and understanding before one year old is very exciting," said Adam M. Franks, M.D., professor of family and community health at the Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine and corresponding author on the study.

In addition to Franks, physicians Callie Seaman, M.D., and William Rollyson, M.D., and researcher Todd Davies, Ph.D., teamed with Emily K. Franks, a speech-language pathologist, to co-author the article.

"While our team is excited about our findings, the real winners are the participating children and families in this area that have been benefited from the bonding experience of experiencing this co-reading through their participation in the project," Franks said.

The authors hope to expand this research to assess the benefits in infants of mothers with opioid use disorder who are suffering from withdrawal.

This work is supported by a rural research grant from the Robert C. Byrd Center for Rural Health.

Story Source:

Materials provided by **Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine**. *Note: Content may be edited for style and length.*

Journal Reference:

1. Adam M. Franks, Callie Seaman, Emily K. Franks, William Rollyson, Todd Davies. **Parental Reading to Infants Improves Language Score: A Rural Family Medicine Intervention**. *The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*, 2022; 35 (6): 1156 DOI: 10.3122/jabfm.2022.220064R2
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