



READ TO YOUR BABY: DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Reading 0 yrs+

Children's Literacy Resource Guide

Reading as preventive medicine



"When parents read to their children, they're practicing preventive medicine," says Calgary pediatrician Dr. Peter Nieman, principal author of *Promoting Literacy in the Physician's Office*, a Canadian Pediatric Society (CPS) position statement. "If parents expose their children to books at an early age, they can greatly decrease that child's chances of developing a low self-esteem, engaging in delinquency or substance abuse, and of becoming economically disadvantaged later in life."

Between 5% and 10% of school-aged children are at below-average reading levels. The first three to four years of a child's life are the most crucial in developing their literacy skills. Therefore, physicians—pediatricians in particular—are in an ideal position to encourage parents to read to their children and help develop their literacy skills.

Tips from the Canadian Pediatric Society

- ◆ Read to your child: Even very young babies are fascinated by books. Toddlers can name what they see in picture books. They like rhymes and short stories.
- ◆ Read with Children: Children who learn to read need to practice this new skill. If they are doing well, nightly home reading is a chance to show off. If they are having trouble, reading at home with adults provides a safe place to practice.
- ◆ Even when your children can read alone, continue to read out loud with them.
- ◆ When you are helping a child read, focus on meaning. Reading well is about understanding meaning, and not just knowing how to say the words. If your child is stuck on a word, don't just 'sound it out.' Help your child figure out the word from the context of the rest of the passage or the pictures.
- ◆ Give your child a choice among books. Though children may not like to be told what to read, they may not make good choices if left completely on their own.
- ◆ Ask the experts for help! Teachers and librarians are good sources of advice for choosing books that are appropriate for your child's age and reading level.

More info: www.cpa.ca