

Pre-verbal Communication – Eye Contact

Information for patients, relatives and
carers

December 2023

What is eye contact?

Eye contact is the ability to look at other people in the eye to give or gain information about the person or the situation. It is an extremely important part of your child's communication and interaction with others.

Why is eye contact important?

Eye contact is very important as your child is growing-up. By giving eye contact we can gather information about a person or situation, as well as giving a message e.g. children can learn to copy sounds and actions by watching people. It is also a useful tool to help your child give important messages about their feelings and needs without using words. Eye contact is also an important social skill.

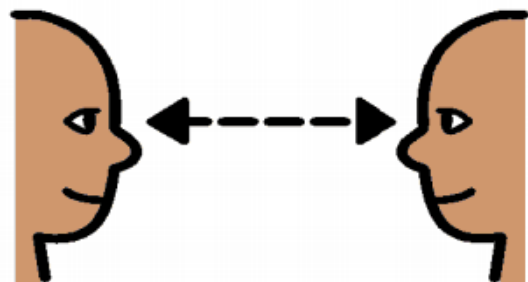
However, some children find giving eye contact difficult and may feel uncomfortable.

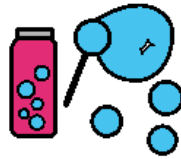
How do I increase my child's eye contact?

- Come down to your child's level when communicating or playing so that you are face to face – this makes it easier for them to look at you
- Never force eye contact!
- Hold toys/objects next to your head at eye level – this may prompt your child to look at your eyes
- When playing games, leave gaps and little pauses in between – this may prompt your child to look up to see what is going on
- Gaps and pauses also give your child a chance to give eye contact to show they want to carry on
- Your child will be more likely to take part if they are enjoying themselves!

Activities to try at home:

- ☐ 1. Bubbles
- ☐ 2. Ready... Steady... Go! Games
- ☐ 3. Funny Faces





Bubbles:

- Blow bubbles with your child
- Leave little pauses and wait for your child to give you eye contact to signal they want more
- If needed call their name to get their attention and bring the bubble pot to eye level – to prompt eye contact
- Enjoy blowing and popping the bubbles together!

Ready... Steady... Go! Games:

- Pick a fun game to play with your child e.g. playing on a swing, knocking over bricks, click clack track, rolling a ball or even bubbles again
- Start saying “ready... steady... go!” and start the action
- Repeat repeat repeat!
- After 10 repetitions say “ready... steady...” then pause and look at your child to see if they are looking at you
- If they do quickly say “GO!” and start the action
- If they don’t say “GO!” and start the action anyway, then keep repeating the “ready... steady... go!” and try again later



Funny Faces:

- Find a mirror and look at your child – you can find mirrors everywhere, around the house, in the car or even in shops
- Pull funny faces, wiggle your tongue, tilt your head and smile at your child in the mirror to get their attention
- Encourage them to watch you while you pull your face and join in and they may even copy you
- You can make it even more fun by wearing funny scarves, hats or glasses!



How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have.

If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 0191 445 6129 (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday).

You can also email PALS at ghnt.pals.service@nhs.net

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Mrs Trudie Davies,
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Trust Headquarters,
Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
Sheriff Hill,
Gateshead,
NE9 6SX

The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website ([Privacy - QE Gateshead](#)) or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net.

**This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats
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