

PRESS RELEASE
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UNICEF AND H&M FOUNDATION URGE FATHERS TO SPEAK BABY TALK TO BOOST THEIR BABIES' BRAINS

Today, UNICEF and non-profit H&M Foundation launch Baby Talk For Dads. The initiative encourages dads to interact more with their babies at an early age, and highlights how baby talk stimulates learning and development. To learn the most important language in the world for boosting your baby's brain, an interactive course is available at babytalkfordads.org. In a [film](#) to launch the initiative, real-life dads try to master the art of baby talk.

The Baby Talk for Dads initiative is part of a Global Program on Early Childhood Development that was launched by UNICEF and non-profit H&M Foundation in 2014. It has so far reached more than 135,000 children.

– Baby talk may sound silly to us, but not to your child. It actually helps develop their brain. But as it turns out, dads don't speak baby talk as much as moms do – and that needs to change. Now, we challenge dads to become fluent baby talkers through Baby Talk for Dads. It's a fun and easy tool to highlight a very important issue, says Diana Amini, Global Manager, H&M Foundation.

Research shows that when we speak slower, more melodically and make exaggerated sounds it makes it easier for babies to learn new words and develop cognitive abilities. It's important for all caregivers to have two-way conversations with babies, using eye contact, mirroring baby's expressions and responding to cues. Meanwhile, studies show that moms and dads don't interact with their babies in the same way – neither when it comes to how they talk to them or how often they do it.

– Healthy brain development during the early years of life is reliant upon responsive interactions and stimulating experiences, along with good nutrition and protection – and it is parents who hold the biggest stake in providing this environment. We hope that this innovative tool helps inspire fathers *and* all caregivers to talk more with their babies, says UNICEF Chief of Early Childhood Development Dr. Pia Britto.

The Baby Talk For Dads course consists of three playful voice exercises caregivers can do with or without their child. Each exercise has been developed using the expertise of researcher Dr. Marina Kalashnikova from The Basque Center on Cognition, Brain and Language, and focusses on topics such as tone of voice and how to have a two-way interaction with your baby.

– When we talk to our babies from the earliest moment of life – particularly in melodic, high-pitched, and exaggerated tones – we have a profound impact on their cognitive development. In our research we've seen marked differences in the early development of babies who have experienced responsive baby talk with their caregivers and other family members around them, to those that haven't, says Dr. Kalashnikova.

Notes to Editors

- Baby Talk for Dads has been developed in collaboration with Dr Marina Kalashnikova, researcher in Infancy Studies and staff scientist at The Basque Center on Cognition, Brain and Language. More information about Dr Kalashnikova and her research can be found [here](#).
- Images, a short launch film, information about Baby Talk For Dads and the Global Program on Early Childhood Development can be downloaded [here](#).
- At babytalkfordads.org, caregivers can share the course on Facebook, Twitter or via e-mail. It is also possible to post it on Instagram with the hashtag [#babytalkfordads](#).

About H&M Foundation

The H&M Foundation is a non-profit global foundation headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. Its mission is to drive long lasting, positive change and improve living conditions by investing in people, communities and innovative ideas. Through partnerships with organisations around the globe, the H&M Foundation aims to accelerate the progress needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It focuses on four areas; Education, Water, Equality and Planet. The H&M Foundation is privately funded by the Stefan Persson family, founders and main owners of H&M group. Since 2013, the Stefan Persson family has donated 1.5 billion Swedish krona (\$200 million/€163 million) to the H&M Foundation. Visit hmfoundation.com and follow [@hmfoundation](#) on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. Follow UNICEF on Twitter and Facebook.

For further information, please contact:

Ingeborg Ekblom, UNICEF Sverige, ingeborg.ekblom@unicef.se
Malin Björne, H&M Foundation, malin.bjorne@hmfoundation.com