

READ EARLY, OFTEN AND ALOUD

A childhood-development effort enlists pediatricians to get books to kids and parents.

By **CARINE NADEL**
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

Zuckerman was in Orange County recently for the campaign's kickoff and answered some questions about early literacy and his own "Reach Out and Read" program.

Q. What exactly is the thought behind the "Read Early, Read Aloud" program?

A. Research has shown that the first five years of life are critical to a child's language development; reading to a young child will help them to have not only a love of books, but a love of knowledge as well.

Think of it this way: You bring your child to the pediatrician and give them vaccines to protect their bodies. With this program you and your child's doctor can help protect their minds as well.

There are so many ways for today's parent to connect with young children, but one of the best is putting them on your lap and reading to them.

That's the message of the national "Read Early, Read Aloud" campaign to develop literacy at an early age.

To help reach that goal, the campaign is making books a part of pediatric care: Children receive books during their regular appointments with the doctor.

Advocates include Dr. Barry Zuckerman, a nationally recognized pediatrician and champion of childhood literacy, and, in Southern California, eight First 5 and Children and Families commissions.



Reading to kids, as Merrily Kutner does here in Tustin, stimulates their brains and reinforces family bonds, says pediatrician Barry Zuckerman, an advocate of the "Read Early, Read Aloud" campaign.

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Q. Are there guidelines as to when to begin, how long to read for, or what type of book to read?

A. The best advice I can give - rule of thumb, if you will - is to take the signals your little one gives you to heart.

Children of all ages benefit from having a parent read to

them. According to the Archives of Disease in Childhood, 16 percent of parents of kids under age 3 don't read to them at all; 23 percent only do so once or twice a week.

Reading to your child should be done way more than that, even to a baby who can't even hold a book.

A 6-month-old can be held on their mom or dad's lap and shown a board book. They won't sit still for a story, but they love to look at pictures of other babies or fun objects like balls, puppies, kittens and such. When they start squirming, stop. They let you know when they want to move on to other things.

Early reading

For more information about early literacy go to:

- earlyliteracyprogram.oc.org
- reachoutandread.org

One- and 2-year-olds love to look at objects. Again, they may not want to hear a story, but they love to be asked questions! Things like, "Is this a ball or a pony?" "Look at the boy, where is his nose?"

This is how they learn their body parts, colors, language skills. They associate the unhurried voice of their parent with "special" time meant just for them. The time is magical and they have almost a little cocoon with the parent. It can also be with a grandparent or other close family member.

At the ages of 3 to 4, rhyming books and storylines start to be able to make an impact.

This is the ultimate in child stimulation development. Children learn a love of books and learning.

Q. Do you have any suggestions for some of these books for the different age groups?

A. As a matter of fact we've created a wonderful Web site for parents. It has all kinds of information, book titles and activities: reachoutandread.org.

Q. Any last words of wisdom about reading to a child under 5?

A. Again, take your signals from your child. You may only hold a book for a few seconds, or you might be fortunate to have this special time for over 15 minutes. But always remember this activity is truly the gift of time for both you and your little one.

It really is as important to their development as a nutritious diet, good health care and exercise. Over a dozen research studies have proven that children who are read to score higher than their peers on vocabulary tests and are far better prepared to succeed in school.

On line Link:

<http://www.oeregister.com/articles/read-child-children-2233672-books-lo>

