

## Health Watch -- Reading to Children

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Sometimes the old-fashioned ways are better than high technology.

There are a number of high-tech methods available today for helping children learn – educational videos, interactive computer programs, instructional television and even some computer games. But doctors at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas say these gadgets and gizmos can't beat the tried-and-true method for helping children learn language skills: reading to them.

[Dr. Paul Bauer](#), a UT Southwestern otolaryngologist who deals with speech and hearing issues, says the first thing he asks parents with children who have delayed language skills is how much they read to their children. Reading to children helps them learn to understand language and develop speech.

Don't wait until children are learning to talk or showing signs of understanding language. Start reading to infants when they're as young as 6 months old. They may not understand enough words to follow a story, but hearing the sounds of words as you read helps their brains develop critical language skills. Being read to helps children learn to pronounce words, expands their vocabulary and begins programming the brain for more advanced speech and reading as they get older.

As an additional benefit, teaching your children to love reading will give them an advantage in school and in life, since reading is such a crucial part of learning any

subject. Reading skills are a major predictor of academic success. The more children enjoy reading, the more they'll practice and the better their skills will become.

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Aug. 2004

*Health Watch is heard Monday through Friday nationwide on the "Stardust" format of ABC Satellite Radio. Call your local radio station and ask if they carry the program.*