

# GROWING WITH CICC

Play, Laugh, Learn



## Welcome

*Growing with CICC* is the official newsletter of Centennial Infant and Child Centre's Early Intervention Program. This newsletter has been designed to help you support your child's development

in different ways. We are delighted to share our ideas, resources, stories, and news with you. If you have any questions, please ask your Early Childhood Interventionist.

## CICC SPOTLIGHT

### Katherine: Then & Now

This is Katherine, a proud alum of Centennial Infant and Child Centre (CICC). She began her journey with CICC as a baby in the Early Intervention program and thrived as a preschooler in our specialized preschool. Today, she is a dedicated CICC employee and volunteer, reflecting a nearly 40-year history with "Centennial."

"I love working at Centennial," she shares. "It's a great school!"

Jerry, Katherine's devoted father, fondly recalls those early years. "The Early Intervention program was a godsend for Hazel and me as first-time parents," he says. "Home visits from the kind, calm, and experienced Ann Cooper and Chesley Reese gave us hope and great advice." When it came time to choose a preschool, "there was no question," Jerry explains. "We knew Centennial was



## Who We Are & What We Do

### Our Mission Statement:

"Centennial Infant and Child Centre strengthens families and their young children with special needs to develop confidence and skills for the best start in life."

Centennial Infant and Child Centre is committed to the development and education of young children with developmental challenges.

CICC focuses on the individual needs of each child and family through Early Intervention at home, in our specialized preschool program, and through participation in community programs.

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the place for her." Jerry describes how the nurturing environment touched the whole family: "It was healing and heart-warming to see our special child so loved and appreciated."



The support Katherine received as a child shaped her future. "When she finished high school at 21 and got a job at Centennial, it was a dream come true," says Jerry. Now, as a paid Classroom Assistant, Katherine tidies art supplies, toys, and snack,

noting her very favourite part:

**I love playing with the children!**  
- Katherine

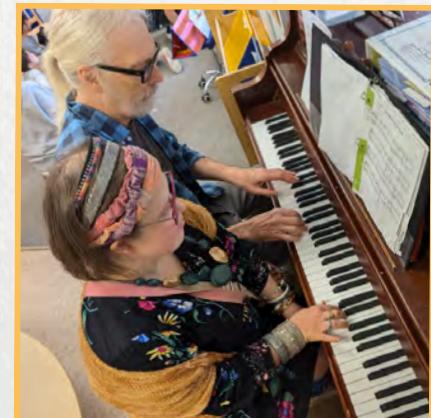
Jerry beams with pride: "I am very proud that Katherine has had a job at Centennial going on 18 years now! She never wants to miss a shift."

Often riding a tandem bike with Jerry, Katherine describes her commute to work:

**I sometimes go to work by bike, but also Wheel Trans and walking.**  
- Katherine

Volunteerism at CICC has long been a family affair for the Newtons. After Hazel retired from playing the oboe, she became a volunteer pianist at CICC. When she passed away, Jerry volunteered to step in. "Playing for Music Circle is one of the highlights

of my week," he shares.



Katherine joins Jerry on the piano during Music Circle, highlighting their special bond and honouring Hazel's memory.

**When I was little, I started playing the piano and I still play. I love playing the piano. I grew up with those songs.**  
- Katherine

Jerry concludes, "A community of love and support—That's what Centennial has meant to us all this time."

## It's Kindergarten Registration Time!

Children turning 4 years old in 2025 can attend Junior Kindergarten in September 2025. Here's what you need to know to get started:



**Register early, especially if your child has extra support needs.** This will help the receiving school plan and be ready.



**Register at your local school,** even if you're considering programs in other schools. Click below to find your local school.

[Toronto District School Board \(TDSB\) school locator](#)

[Toronto Catholic District School Board \(TCDSB\) school locator](#)



**Arrange a meeting with your local school Principal right away.**

Discuss your child's strengths and needs with the Principal.

School Board planning meetings will likely follow in spring 2025.



### KEY DATES

#### TDSB

Registration Opens:  
**January 6, 2025**  
[More Info & Link to Register](#)

#### TCDSB

Registration Opens:  
**January 22, 2025 10:00 AM**  
[More Info & Link to Register](#)



## Get to Know Your Early Intervention Team: Meet Kim!

Kim Saltsman, BA, OCT, MT | Early Childhood Interventionist, C/ICC

Hi there! I'm Kim Saltsman, Early Childhood Interventionist (ECI)! My story at CICC dates back to 2006 when I first volunteered in CICC's specialized preschool. I was immediately captivated. The children, the staff, the positive energy—there was something deeply magical about it. I knew my professional future would be at CICC.

Fast forward to 2010, after teaching in another school, something in my heart pulled me back to CICC. I returned as a member of the teaching staff for 10 wonderful years, teaching the most amazing children and working alongside the most dedicated teaching staff and therapists.

Now, as an ECI, I have a deeper understanding of family life during the critical early years before a child is ready for preschool. Home visits allow me to use my teaching skills to support families and celebrate their children's earliest developmental milestones. Providing in-home support allows me to consider daily life from the family's perspective and find

meaningful ways to offer help within their everyday routines. When asked, "What's your favorite part of this job?" without hesitation, I say, "It's the opportunity to meet so many diverse families and learn from each of them." Seeing all those sweet little faces is also a definite bonus!



Kim Saltsman

### HOT TIP

## Routines to Support Emotional Regulation

Khadijah Abdul-Gafoor, BA (Hons), RECE, RC | Early Childhood Interventionist, C/ICC

Young children take time to learn how to manage big emotions. Setting predictable routines can help bring calm and reduce emotional dysregulation. Children are better able to manage their feelings when they know what to expect. They feel more in control of what's happening to them, less anxious, and more secure. Here's an example of something to try:

#### Set a Predictable Plan:

- Sequence daily activities in the same order everyday to help create predictability.

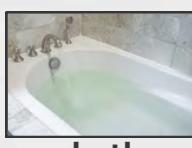
#### Talk About It:

- Talk about the routine using simple language.

#### Use Visuals:

- Use photos of each activity (or real objects) arranged in order to help increase your child's understanding.

FOR  
example



# Why is My Child Not Talking Yet?

Christine Guest, M.Sc., Reg. CASLPO, S-LP (C) | Speech-Language Pathologist, Surrey Place

As parents, it's natural to wonder, "Is my child developing well?" "Should my child be talking by now?" "If not, what should I do?" Hopefully this article will help answer some of these questions and help you feel more confident about next steps – even if that means simply relaxing and continuing what you are already doing.

## UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

Communication develops little by little. Babies cry and coo. Then they babble and begin to make more meaningful sounds that eventually form words. Most children say their first words somewhere between 12 and 18 months old. These first words often do NOT sound like the adult version of the words -- and that's ok! This comes with practice.

All children are different. Even if your friend's 18-month-old is talking up a storm, it's fine that yours is using 10-20 words at the same age. [Surrey Place's Communication Checklist](#) can help you know what skills to expect.



## WHEN SHOULD I GET HELP?

Talk to a professional if your child:

- does not react to sounds or rarely makes noises other than crying.
- is missing more than one skill on the communication checklists.
- seems uninterested in interacting with familiar people.

## WHAT CAN I DO AT HOME WITH MY BABY?

- Talk about what your baby shows interest in (e.g., say "dog" when they look at one).
- Imitate their sounds (e.g., if they say "duhduhduh," you repeat "duhduhduh" and wait for a response).
- Say what your baby might if they could talk (e.g., say "You're tired" if they rub their eyes).

For these and other strategies, visit [Ways to Support Your Child's Communication Development - Surrey Place](#).



## WHERE SHOULD I GET HELP?

Reach out to the following professionals for guidance:

- your doctor or pediatrician
- EarlyON staff
- your ECI
- a daycare teacher
- [Refer to Surrey Place online](#) or **call 1-833-575-KIDS.** FREE speech and language services are available in Toronto. No doctor's referral is needed.

**Enjoy playing and communicating with your child. You are their best teacher!**

# Low Tone: What is it and How Can I Help My Child?

Ad Rosszell, B.H.Sc.OT OT Reg. (Ont.). | Occupational Therapist, C/CC

## WHAT IS MUSCLE TONE?

Muscle tone is the natural tension or tightness in our muscles when they are at rest. Muscle tone is controlled by the brain, and is holding up your body right now! Tone keeps our bodies in an upright position against gravity, usually without any conscious effort.

Tone enables babies to lift their heads, sit up, and eventually stand on their own.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF LOW TONE?

Low tone (hypotonia) can affect specific parts of the body or the entire body. Babies with low tone may appear floppy due to looser muscles, tendons, and ligaments, making their joints very flexible. Low tone ranges from mild to severe, but in general, babies with low tone may:

- feel soft (low muscle tension) and very flexible.
- have feeding and speech delays.
- struggle to hold their head up when held or when on their tummy.
- lie on their back with knees bent and legs out to the sides (like doing the splits).
- have difficulty lifting arms and legs, limiting kicking, reaching, or grasping.
- struggle to start rolling or sitting up.
- sit slumped or in a W-position for stability
- prefer bum scooting over crawling.
- dislike standing and need ankle support.
- move and walk later than other babies.
- tire quickly and reach milestones slowly.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



### Muscle strength

involves deliberate, active effort and movement.



**Muscle tone** enables us to maintain our posture without actively trying.

## HOW CAN I HELP MY BABY?

Here are some tips if your baby has low tone:

**Keep in Mind:** Babies with low tone are not “lazy.” They need to work harder than other babies to stabilize joints and muscles.

**Practice and Rest:** Give plenty of time for practice, repetition, and rest breaks.

**Don't Give Up:** Low tone can slow skill development but doesn't stop it. Keep going!

**Seek Guidance:** Occupational or Physical Therapists can suggest helpful activities and exercises for your baby.

**Try at Home:** Support tummy time on the floor, exercise ball, or even on your body to help your baby improve tone in the neck, shoulders, and arms!





Hospital-to-Home (H2H) has achieved an exciting milestone! After extensive data analysis and program evaluation, our impact has been published in the peer-reviewed journal, [Early Human Development \(Vol. 198, Nov 2024\)](#). This study validates H2H as an evidence-based program. It demonstrates the positive impact of Early Intervention on both caregiver wellbeing and parenting practices, while highlighting the added benefit of starting services earlier—in the NICU.

Hospital-to-Home showcases the remarkable power of collaboration between hospitals, community programs, and scientific research.



Lisa Smuskowitz, PT; Karli Gavendo, OT; Mandeep Grewal-Barton, CICC ECI; Freda Vane, OT; Colleen Rocha, RN

Our publication is more than a milestone—it is a call to action—to secure H2H's future and expand its reach to even more families!

## H2H: Evidence-Based Call to Action

### HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO:

- **Sunnybrook Hospital's NICU and NNFU teams**—with special thanks to Dr. Paige Church, Dr. Rudaina Banihani, Dr. Elizabeth Asztalos, Nancy Chen, and Colleen Rocha—for your collaborative efforts, and for referring families to H2H.
- **CICC's Early Intervention staff** for guiding families through immense uncertainty with compassion and skill.
- **Dr. Eunice Jang and her team at OISE, University of Toronto** for showcasing H2H's impact through expert evaluation.
- the **brave families** who trust in our care during life's most pivotal transition.
- **Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation** for empowering our team to make meaningful, lasting change.

A major goal of the “BOOST” team is the smooth transition home for babies and families with complex needs. The CICC H2H program has enhanced our goals by understanding the needs of families prior to discharge home.

Colleen Rocha, Registered Nurse | Sunnybrook NICU

### Remembering Beverly Davis

We remember the life and legacy of Beverly Davis who served as CICC's Early Intervention Manager from 2008 to 2018. Beverly's career, which began with a background in Child Development and Family Resource Consulting, spanned over two decades of dedicated service. Even after her retirement, Beverly volunteered in CICC's preschool and remained a dear friend to her colleagues. Sadly, Beverly passed away in the summer of 2024. Our thoughts and hearts go out to her family, friends, and all those who knew her. Beverly's kindness, leadership, and contributions to the developmental sector will always be remembered.

