

 HOT NEWS

Six-month-old babies understand words like 'apple' and 'arm'

LONDON — Children can understand basic words like “apple” and “arm” at just six months of age, almost twice as early as previously thought, according to new research.

Although most children do not speak meaningful words until their first birthday, the findings suggest they can, in some cases, understand what an adult is referring to much earlier.

It contradicts the consensus that while babies can understand elements of sounds in their native language between six and nine months, they do not fully comprehend the meaning of speech until close to their first birthday.

In a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* journal, 33 infants aged six to nine months were tested on their understanding of common nouns

alongside 50 children aged 10 to 20 months.

The children were shown a screen showing two images, such as an apple and an arm, and asked by their mother where one of the objects was.

Researchers found that 26 of the 33 six to nine-month-olds tended to glance at the correct image. Results from the same test on older children showed that there was no significant improvement between the ages of six and 14 months, when levels of understanding improved rapidly.

Dr Daniel Swingley, one of the researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, said: “I think this study presents a great message to parents: You can talk to your babies and they’re going to understand a bit of what you’re saying. And the more they know, the more they can build on what they know.” THE DAILY TELEGRAPH