Developmental Milestones

What is child development?

Child development refers to how a child becomes able to do more complex things as they get older. Development is different than growth. Growth only refers to the child getting bigger in size. If you are concerned about your child’s development, please see Developmental Delay on YourChild. When we talk about normal development, we are talking about developing skills like:

- **Gross motor**: using large groups of muscles to sit, stand, walk, run, etc., keeping balance, and changing positions.
- **Fine motor**: using hands to be able to eat, draw, dress, play, write, and do many other things.
- **Language**: speaking, using body language and gestures, communicating, and understanding what others say.
- **Cognitive**: Thinking skills: including learning, understanding, problem-solving, reasoning, and remembering.
- **Social**: Interacting with others, having relationships with family, friends, and teachers, cooperating, and responding to the feelings of others.

What are developmental milestones?

Developmental milestones are a set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that most children can do at a certain age range. Your pediatrician uses milestones to help check how your child is developing. Although each milestone has an age level, the actual age when a normally developing child reaches that milestone can vary quite a bit. Every child is unique!

Where can I find some good links with developmental milestones for my child’s age group?

**Overall development—gross and fine motor, language, cognitive, and social skills**

- **The first two years**:
  - 1 month
  - 3 months
  - 7 months
  - Milestones for the first year (broken down into 3, 6 and 12 months)
  - 12 months
  - Second year (broken down into 18 and 24 months)
  - 2 years
  - Hitos del Desarrollo y Crecimiento (Developmental milestones for babies from birth to age two--in Spanish)
  - Lista de indicadores del desarrollo (Printable checklists for 3, 7, 12 and 24 months--in Spanish)

- **The preschool years**:
  - Third year
  - 3-4 years
  - Fourth year
  - 4-5 years
  - Lista de indicadores del desarrollo (Printable checklists for 3, 4 and 5 years--in Spanish)

- **School-age child development, ages 6 to 12**:
  - Development in children ages 6 through 12, includes advice for how to help children reach their potentials.

- **Adolescent Development**: Physical, cognitive and psycho-social and what parents can do to help.

**Social and Emotional Development**

Zero to Three offers these milestones for how children develop and the role that parents play at different stages. The emphasis here is more on social and emotional development:

- Birth to 8 months
- 8-18 months
- 18 months to 3 years

**Speech and Language Development**

- **YourChild**: Speech and Language Delays and Disorders includes a chart of language milestones.
- Speech and language milestones with links to interactive checklists and a good explanation of what it all means. Also in Spanish: Habla y idioma: Hitos del desarrollo.
- How does your child hear and talk? Lists hearing, understanding and talking milestones for birth to five years of age, and includes information on where to get help. Also in Spanish: ¿Qué tal habla y oye su niño?

**How does my child’s doctor check my child’s development?**

Assessing your child’s development is a team effort. Your family plays an important role. At your child’s well-child visit, your pediatrician will spend
time watching your child and talking with you to find out about what your child is doing since your last visit. Tell your child’s doctor about any worries or concerns you may have. Your pediatrician may also use developmental screening in the office. Screening involves a series of questions and observations that get at your child’s ability to perform certain age-appropriate tasks. Using developmental milestones as a guide can help pediatricians identify children who may be at risk for developmental delay.

What if my child is not reaching their developmental milestones?

If your child’s doctor finds anything that may be of concern, they can refer you to a specialist and/or work with your family to identify services that may help your child. If your child is delayed, you should start intervention as early as possible so your child can make the best possible progress. Please see Developmental Delay on YourChild for more on the importance of early intervention and how to get your child into the early intervention system.

Where can I get more information and resources on the development children born prematurely?

- Developmental milestones for children born prematurely, from birth to 18 months, with information on exceptions and concerns. This site also helps you figure out the corrected age of your premature baby.

Where can I get more information and resources on the development newborns to three-year-olds?

- Zero to Three is a leading resource on the first three years of life. They offer great tips and information to parents on the development of babies and toddlers.
- Early Head Start (EHS) is for low-income babies, toddlers and pregnant women and their families. EHS programs enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; support parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and help parents move toward self-sufficiency. Find out how to enroll in EHS.

Where can I get more information and resources on the development three- to five-year-olds?

- Head Start is a national, community-based child development program for three- to five-year-olds that promotes school readiness. The program provides educational, health, nutrition, social and other services to enrolled kids and their families. Find out how to get your child into Head Start.
- Head Start online community for parents
- Find a Head Start Program near you

Also see these related topics on YourChild:

- Developmental Delay
- Speech and Language Delays and Disorders
- Learning Disabilities for information on learning delays
- Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD)

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