



When to Be Concerned About Developmental Delays

Children don't develop at the same rate. Some children develop a little earlier while other develop a little later. Because development is such a complicated thing - it involves walking, talking, eating, making eye contact, developing social skills, and responding to the world around them, among others - physicians and medical professionals have developed lists of things that children should be able to do at an approximate age.

These tasks are called '[developmental milestones](#).' When people think of milestones, they might think that if a child doesn't develop a particular milestone in a particular order, their child is at risk. This isn't always the case - some children, for example, might not speak a single word and then skip from saying only a few words to speaking in simple sentences. However, it is *never* a good idea to wait if your child is missing developmental milestones, because of one key factor:

The earlier you start Early Intervention, the more effective it can be.

Parents should *always* talk to their child's pediatrician about any concerns they may have about their child's development, especially as they grow out of infancy. If a child isn't doing things like tracking with their eyes or rolling over after several months, this could be a sign of a developmental delay, which could eventually become a developmental disability if development doesn't proceed past that milestone.

Your child's pediatrician might refer your child to [Early Intervention](#) (EI) services in your state, or refer you to a Behavioral-Developmental Pediatrician that specializes in developmental disabilities. These specialized programs and practitioners can help your child maximize their development starting at a very early age. It's very important to have your child evaluated by an Early Intervention program, because the program is *completely free* and helps identify ways to support your child's development. Early Intervention is available for children ages 0-3 through the [Zero to Three Program](#). If a child is older than 3 when parents find developmental concerns, they can contact their child's school district and ask for an evaluation then. You *do not* need a medical referral or formal diagnosis to get a free *Child Find* evaluation for Early Intervention.

What are some of the signs parents should look out for?

In many cases, parents will bring their child to a pediatrician and the pediatrician will explain what their child should be doing at a specific age. There are developmental milestones that babies can fulfill as early as a few days or weeks after birth. Parents should be especially concerned if the child starts missing developmental milestones one after the other, or if their development seems to 'stall.' If you want pictures or videos of what these developmental milestones look like, please visit [the CDC's Developmental Milestones in Action page](#).



If your child is not meeting these milestones, talk to your child's pediatrician. The pediatrician may then formally screen your child for general development using a formalized screening tool. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), children should be screened for general development at 9, 18 and 24 or 30 months. They should also be screened for autism at 18 and 24 months (or whenever a parent brings up a concern).

For more information on specific kinds of developmental milestones, see the following resources:

- [American Academy of Pediatrics: Physical Delays and What To Look For](#)
- [Milestone Moments: What Your Baby Should Be Able to Do Month-By-Month](#)
- [Developmental Concerns? How to Help your Child](#)
- [Speech Development and Speech Delays](#)
- [When Should I Be Concerned About Speech Delays?](#)
- [Children's Ages and Stages: What Should Kids Be Doing?](#)
- [Does My Child Have a Behavioral or Emotional Disorder?](#)
- [Should We Be Worried About Toe-Walking?](#)
- [Should I Be Worried About Autism?](#)
- [ChildMind Guide to Developmental Milestones](#) (Ages 0-3)
- [ChildMind Symptom Checker](#) (Ages 4+)

For more general information on developmental delays, see the following resources:

- [The Parent-to-Parent Network](#) (Support and Information)
- [Could My Child Have a Developmental Delay?](#)
- [Parents.com: Developmental Concerns To Think About](#)
- [FirstSigns.org: Developmental Screening](#)
- [TheMighty's Parent Perspective: What is Global Developmental Delay?](#)

Disclaimer: This document is intended as general educational material and should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please bring up any concerns about your child's development with a medical professional.