

Appendix A Important Milestones

Deciding When to Refer a Child for Evaluation of His or Her Development

Infants and toddlers develop at their own pace. Each child has a unique heredity, unique experiences in the womb, unique experiences at birth, and in everyday life. Two children of the same age may have very different abilities, even though they are both developing in a way that is typical for their age.

Sometimes, however, a child who is “behind” does have a delay or disability. Adults who care for young children must be alert for signs that a child is not developing as expected. It is best to discover a delay or disability early in a child’s life so the child can receive special services as soon as possible. These services will help a child learn and develop as fully as possible.

This list of important milestones can help parents, teachers and caregivers decide whether a child’s development needs assessing and to find out if there is a delay or disability. Each milestone describes a behavior or skill that most children show by the age listed.

If you are worried about a child’s development, use the list below as a starting point to decide whether a child is reaching important milestones. Look at the milestones for the child’s current age and also look at earlier ages. It is often helpful to ask the child’s parents or guardians what they have noticed about the child. Tell them what you have observed. Use clear language to describe what you have seen or what the child does. If family members agree that a child is not reaching some important milestones as expected, suggest a developmental screening. Encourage families to talk to their child’s health care provider or to contact the Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) in their area.

Visit www.ncei.org/ei/itp/cdsa.html or call 919-707-5520 to locate the CDSA for your area.

Obtaining a developmental screening for a child will help you determine if the child’s development is in the typical range. Highly trained professionals can also perform in-depth evaluations. They can measure a child’s strengths and needs, and recommend services that would benefit the child.

NOTE: *Use this list ONLY to help you decide whether a child may need screening. It is NOT possible to diagnose a delay or disability from this list.*

Infants

At three months, infant...

- ✧ Looks at faces.
- ✧ Is not unduly frightened by new faces or surroundings.
- ✧ Sucks and swallows easily.
- ✧ Follows moving objects with eyes.
- ✧ Lifts head off floor while lying on tummy.
- ✧ Grasps objects in fist.
- ✧ Responds to loud noises.

At four to five months, infant...

- ✧ Reaches for familiar persons.
- ✧ Opens and closes hands (versus keeping them fisted).
- ✧ Brings hands together in the middle of body.
- ✧ Brings objects to his or her mouth.
- ✧ Turns head to locate sounds.
- ✧ Rolls from front to back OR from back to front.

At six to seven months, infant...

- ✧ Smiles and shows other joyful facial expressions.
- ✧ Sits up with help.
- ✧ Reaches for objects with either hand (versus reaching with only one hand).
- ✧ Cuddles and shows affection for people who take care of him or her.
- ✧ Holds head up when in a sitting position.
- ✧ Responds to sounds around him or her.

At eight to nine months, infant...

- ✧ Begins to eat some solid foods.
- ✧ Explores objects placed in hands.
- ✧ Sits alone for extended periods of time.
- ✧ Has developed some way of moving about the room (crawling, rolling, “commando crawl”, etc.).
- ✧ Plays games like peek-a-boo or pat-a-cake.
- ✧ Shares sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions back and forth with others.

At all ages, infant...

- ✦ Has a rounded head (versus a flattened area on the back of the head).
- ✦ Shows steady growth (neither too slow nor too fast) in weight, height, and head size.
- ✦ Has normal muscle tone (not too stiff and not too floppy).
- ✦ Uses both sides of the body when crawling (versus dragging one side).
- ✦ Keeps skills and develops new ones (versus losing skills and not regaining ones he or she once had).

Young Toddlers**At 12 months, child...**

- ✦ Seeks others' attention using sounds and gestures.
- ✦ Participates in "back and forth" social interactions.
- ✦ Seems attached to the adults who take care of him or her most often.
- ✦ Responds to his or her name.
- ✦ Moves into and out of a sitting position.
- ✦ Creeps or crawls on hands and knees.
- ✦ Stands with support and pulls self to standing position.
- ✦ Switches objects from one hand to the other.
- ✦ Tries to finger-feed and hold own bottle or cup.
- ✦ Understands some words.
- ✦ Babbles ("ba-ba-ba", "da-da-da", etc.).
- ✦ Imitates simple sounds.
- ✦ Communicates with gestures such as showing, reaching, or waving.
- ✦ Points to objects or pictures.
- ✦ Looks for objects when he or she saw where they were hidden.

At 14 – 15 months, child...

- ✦ Stands alone.
- ✦ Picks up small objects with thumb and index finger (pincer grasp).
- ✦ Stacks a few blocks.
- ✦ Knows how some familiar household objects are used (e.g., spoon, phone, brush).

At 16 – 18 months, child...

- ✦ Says some words.
- ✦ Walks without help.

At any age, child...

- ✦ Plays with toys that other children his or her age can play with.
- ✦ Walks with a typical "heel to toe" motion (versus mostly on toes).
- ✦ Keeps skills and develops new ones (versus losing skills and not regaining ones he or she once had).

Older Toddlers**At 24 months, child...**

- ✦ Recognizes herself or himself in mirror (points, says "me" or name).
- ✦ Shows a variety of emotions, such as anger, sadness, delight, and fear.
- ✦ Pushes a wheeled toy.
- ✦ Responds to simple questions with "yes" or "no."
- ✦ Follows simple one-step instructions.
- ✦ Uses two-word phrases that are meaningful.
- ✦ Says at least 15 words.
- ✦ Imitates some actions or words.

At 36 months, child...

- ✦ Separates from mother or other caregiver without becoming unduly upset.
- ✦ Shows interest in watching, imitating, and playing with other children.
- ✦ Eats a fairly well-rounded diet. (It is normal for toddlers to eat small amounts at times and to have food preferences.)
- ✦ Begins to show interest in toilet training.
- ✦ Walks and climbs stairs without falling often.
- ✦ Moves about without bumping into objects.
- ✦ Manipulates small objects easily with his or her hands.
- ✦ Follows simple two-step directions.
- ✦ Has speech that can be understood by most people.



- ✦ Points to and names familiar objects.
- ✦ Communicates in 2- or 3-word phrases or sentences.
- ✦ Enjoys being read to.
- ✦ Shows interest in toys.
- ✦ Engages in pretend play.

At any age, child...

- ✦ Plays with toys that other children his or her age can play with.
- ✦ Tolerates most textures of food or clothing.
- ✦ Moves smoothly and can complete new motor tasks with more than one step.
- ✦ Keeps skills and develops new ones (versus losing skills and not regaining ones he or she once had).