

# What Is Child Development?

A child’s early years are very important for their health and development. Children of all abilities, including those with special health needs, need to have their social, emotional, and educational needs met so that they can thrive.



Photo Credit: ChildCareWorks

- Child development refers to the changes that take place from birth to adulthood that allow a child to gain new skills in thinking, communicating, moving around, using their hands, and getting along with others.
- The steps of development typically follow a predictable pattern, but how fast a child develops varies from one child to another.
- Children may show a range of behaviours and abilities and still be considered to be developing normally.
- Child development is influenced by the environment and what is inherited from parents.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

- **MOTOR (physical)**
  - Gross motor (to help move from place to place)
  - Fine motor (using hands)
- **COMMUNICATION (speech/language)**
  - Expressive (speaking)
  - Receptive (listening)
- **COGNITION (thinking, understanding, learning)**
- **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL (getting along with peers and adults)**

## RED FLAGS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Age	Missed Milestones Requiring Intervention
2 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of visual fixation</li><li>• No social smile</li></ul>
4-6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fails to track person or object</li><li>• No steady head control</li><li>• No response/turn to sound or voice</li></ul>
6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decrease/absence of vocalizations</li></ul>
9-12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fails to sit independently</li></ul>
18 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fails to walk independently</li><li>• Does not seek shared attention to object/ event with caregiver</li></ul>
24 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No single words</li></ul>
36 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No three word sentences</li><li>• Cannot follow simple commands</li></ul>
>3 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speech unintelligible</li><li>• Dependence on gestures to follow commands</li></ul>

## WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT MY CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT?

- Speak to your child’s health care provider (paediatrician, general practitioner, family doctor, or nurse).
  - Visit your nearest health centre.
  - Request developmental screening.
- If there are still concerns, request a referral for a developmental evaluation.

### WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Learn the Signs/Act Early \(https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html)
- “Nurturing Your Child’s Early Brain Development” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4ZomIKxRNE>
- [Early Child Development : https://www.who.int/topics/early-child-development/en/](https://www.who.int/topics/early-child-development/en/)
- [What is early childhood development? \(https://pressroom.oecs.org/oecs-and-unicef-supporting-early-childhood-development\)](https://pressroom.oecs.org/oecs-and-unicef-supporting-early-childhood-development)

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