

Motor Development

How your child's physical skills develop

You & Your Child

Your child's growth is a complex process that continues throughout childhood. Children's bodies are constantly going through a number of physical changes. As they do, children develop motor skills or physical abilities.

Some of these changes are major developmental "milestones," such as when your child learns to sit up or walk. Over time, children develop many kinds of motor skills, from being able to walk, run, and hop to being able to grasp and use a pencil.

Watching your child grow is a wonderful experience. Taking note of your child's progress is important.

But too often, parents worry needlessly about whether their child's development is "normal." The fact is, no two children develop at the same rate. Each sets his or her own pace.

So, if your child is developing a little more slowly than another child you know, do not be alarmed. But if you are still concerned, you can always talk to a doctor.

On Back

Some motor development milestones and stages of development.

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Here are some development “milestones.” Remember, these are only averages. Your child will progress at his or her own pace. So use these only as a general guide.

The First Year

- 1 - 2 months: Babies begin to lift their head and shoulders when lying on their stomach. But when seated, a baby's head will usually fall forward.
- 2 - 3 months: Babies grasp objects placed in the palm of their hand; may hold head up when seated, although the head may bob.
- 4 - 6 months: Babies may roll onto their side from their stomach. Some babies may be able to sit unsupported for short periods.
- 7 - 9 months: Babies learn to roll from their backs to their stomachs around this age. They may also pull themselves up to standing position, crawl on all fours, and use fingers and thumbs to hold things much better.
- 10 - 12 months: At this age, babies usually are able to sit for long periods, move more easily, may walk by holding an adult's hand, stand unsupported, and hold a crayon and make marks with it.

1 - 2 Years

- 12 - 15 months: On the average, children learn to walk around this time, with the first shaky steps coming around the 1-year mark. First steps may come later or, sometimes, even earlier. But the age a child first walks usually doesn't mean anything. Also, children at this age are usually able to point, remove covers from containers, and take off their clothing.
- 15 - 24 months: Children's balance and control improves during this period. Toddling becomes more steady. Their confidence builds until they can run, and walk backwards. They may also be able to kick a large ball, scribble well, and stack several blocks.

2 - 3 Years

- Children are very active during this period. They like to run and climb. They also learn to jump with both feet off the ground and seem to be constantly in motion. Some children may learn to pedal riding toys.
- Fine motor skills also improve during this period. Children will learn to turn objects, such as doorknobs and screw-on lids. They begin to use fingers more separately than before and control them better. Some children may draw rough, but recognizable, pictures with a crayon.

3 - 6 Years

- Motor skills become much more refined and smooth during this period. Children usually master skills rather than hit new milestones. And they usually appear more coordinated.
- Their abilities to bounce, throw, and catch balls also improve. Children learn to hop and skip. And by age 6, their balance and coordination may be developed enough to allow them to begin to learn how to skate or ride a bike.
- Children also find it easier to focus on objects in the distance during these years. They usually can focus better on a line of print in a book. By age 6, they can learn to draw several shapes and recognizable pictures, color within the lines, print letters.

How You Can Help

- Be supportive and encouraging. Show confidence in your child's abilities.
- Let your child set the pace.
- Realize that some children are better coordinated than others.
- Do not criticize.
- Talk to a doctor if your child does not do many of the things usually done at his or her age, or if your child stops making regular progress.



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