

AGES & STAGES

Assessing Developmental Delays

Watching your child grow and develop new skills is one of the most exciting aspects of being a parent. All parents anticipate and track their child's development, and the majority of the time children meet their milestones on time. However, parents get concerned when a child doesn't do something by the age he's "supposed to." It's even worse when a friend or relative is telling you all the amazing things his child is doing that yours is not.

All well-child care visits (/English/family-life/health-management/Pages/Well-Child-Care-A-Check-Up-for-Success.aspx) should include specific questions about your child's development and behavior. At the minimum, at certain intervals (9, 18, 30, and 48 months) a formal developmental screen should be administered, using either a parent-completed or directly administered developmental screening tool. Formal developmental screens should also be completed whenever there's a concern about development, whether it be a parent or a pediatrician's concerns. These screens look at all areas of development—language/communication (/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Language-Delay.aspx), problem-solving, social-emotional, and fine and gross motor skills (/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Healthy-Children-Radio-Motor-Delays-Audio.aspx). An autism screening (/English/health-issues/conditions/developmental-disabilities/Pages/How-Doctors-Screen-for-Autism.aspx) should be completed on all children at 18 and 24 months.



Common Screening Tools Used to Help Identify Children at Risk for Developmental Delays and/or Autism:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire
- Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status
- Modified Checklist for Autism In Toddlers
- Others

As long as those periodic evaluations are normal, you can rest assured that your child is developing appropriately and should be fine.

If A Problem is Identified:

When problems are identified, the first step is a referral to early intervention (/English/health-issues/conditions/developmental-disabilities/Pages/Early-Intervention.aspx), which is provided under a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Early intervention is available in every state. Your pediatrician may also refer your child to a developmental-behavioral pediatric specialist (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/health-management/pediatric-specialists/pages/What-is-a-Developmental-Behavioral-Pediatrician.aspx>) who can provide developmental and medical evaluations and follow-up for developmental problems.

Why You and Your Child Are Teachers:

As a parent, you're teaching your child constantly, whether or not you're even trying. Your child is watching your every move and imitating you in words, gestures, and actions. All the while, he's teaching you, helping you become a more responsive parent and eventually bringing you facts, music, adventures, and philosophies you would never have encountered without him.

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Related Articles



Language Delays in Toddlers: Information for Parents

Your baby is able to communicate with you long before he or she speaks a single word! A baby's cry, smile, and responses to you help you to understand his or her needs. [Read more](#)
([/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Language-Delay.aspx](#))



How Doctors Screen for Autism

Pediatricians, nurse practitioners, and family doctors start screening your baby or toddler for signs of developmental or communication challenges like autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from the very first visit. [Read More](#)
([/English/health-issues/conditions/developmental-disabilities/Pages/How-Doctors-Screen-for-Autism.aspx](#))



Developmental Screening Tools List

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(National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center) [Read More](http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf)
(<http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf>)



Learn the Signs. Act Early

(CDC.gov) - Aims to improve early identification of children with autism and other developmental disabilities so children and families can get the services and support they need. [Read More](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html)
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