

Growth and Development: Birth to 6 Months

Watching a young child grow is a wonderful and unique experience for a parent. Learning to sit up, walk, and talk are some of the more major developmental "milestones" your child will achieve. But your child's growth is a complex and ongoing process. Young bodies are constantly going through a number of physical and mental changes.

Although no two children develop at the same rate, they should be able to do certain things at certain ages. As a parent, you are in the best position to note your child's development, and you can use the milestones described below as guidelines.

At the ages noted, observe your child for 1 month. (This lets you take into account any days when your child may be acting differently because he or she is sick or upset.) Use the milestones listed for each age to see how your child is developing.

Remember a "no" answer to any of these questions does not necessarily mean that there is a problem. Every child develops at his or her own pace and may sometimes develop more slowly in certain areas than other children the same age. Keep in mind these milestones should be used only as guidelines.

Plan to talk about these guidelines with your pediatrician during your next office visit if you note the following:

- major differences between your child's development and the "milestones"
- your child does not yet do many of the things usually done at his or her age

3 Months

When your baby is lying on his back, does he move each of his arms equally well? Check "no" if your child makes jerky or uncoordinated movements with one or both of his arms or legs, or uses only one arm all the time.

Does your child make sounds such as gurgling, cooing, babbling, or other noises besides crying?

Does your baby respond to your voice?

Are your child's hands frequently open?

When you hold your child in the upright position, can he support his head for more than a moment?

6 Months

Have you seen your baby play with her hands by touching them together?

Does your child turn his head to sounds that originate out of his immediate area?

Has your baby rolled over from her stomach to her back or from back to stomach?

When you hold your baby under his arms, can he bear some weight on his legs?
Check "Yes " only if he tries to stand on his feet and supports some of his weight.

When your child is on his stomach, can he support his weight on outstretched hands?

Does your baby see small objects such as crumbs?

If you have any questions, plan to discuss them with your pediatrician. Pediatricians are trained to detect and treat developmental problems in children. Many problems, if detected early, can be treated by your pediatrician and successfully managed.