



Baby Development and Milestones

Development describes the series of complex changes - physical, emotional, social - which your baby undergoes on their way to adulthood. While you may be amazed by the speed at which your baby develops (particularly in the first year), development is a gradual process that stops and starts.

Your baby's development is not a competitive sport so don't start to feel the pressure to compare your baby with another. They are all unique and will develop at different rates. Instead, enjoy the ride - your baby will learn more in their first year of life than ever again, so just watch and wonder (and clap your hands when appropriate!)

Milestones

Developmental achievements are called 'milestones'. Growth and development milestones are meant to be used as a guide, but not something to worry about. While there is a wide range of 'normal' in the growth and development of your baby, most babies do actually pass through developmental stages in the same order.

Regardless of what your parenting bible tells you your baby should be doing in Week 12, your gut instincts will tell you more about whether your baby is thriving than a list of milestones ever will.

Developmental milestones tend to be grouped according to body parts:

- **Gross motor skills** are the large body movements that involve the coordination and control of large muscles and refer to skills such as sitting, walking and running.
- **Fine motor skills** are the small body movements that involve the coordination and control of small muscles and refer to skills such as picking up blocks, clapping hands and holding a book.
- **Vision** refers to the eyes and your baby's ability to see and interpret what she sees.
- **Hearing and speech:** hearing is the ability to hear, listen to and interpret sounds; speech is the ability to understand and learn language.
- **Social and emotional behaviour and understanding** refer to your child's ability to learn and interact with others and includes the skills needed for playing with others, communicating and developing empathy.

Milestone Concerns

As a general guide, if you notice any of the following, you should seek the advice of an expert:

- Your baby isn't responding to noises
- Your baby has white or cloud pupils, or doesn't seem to see objects
- They don't show any curiosity or interest in what's going on around them
- At 3-4 months, your baby has poor head control and can't hold it up
- After 3-4 months, your baby cries persistently each day for more than three hours
- Your baby doesn't move or use both their arms and legs
- By 10 months, your baby cannot sit well on their own
- By 12 months, your baby resists bearing their own weight

IMPORTANT!

Premature babies generally reach milestones closer to their adjusted age - the age they would be if they had been born full-term.