



Developmental Delays

What are developmental delays?



Day by day, even hour by hour, a child grows and develops new skills, abilities and ideas. The first months and years of a child's life are full of new things — first smiles, first steps, first words.

But sometimes a child does not seem to be developing as quickly as other children of the same age. This may indicate the child has a "developmental delay," a term used when a child is behind, and not reaching milestones at the expected time.

A child showing signs

of a developmental delay may not be on track in thinking and language skills, problem solving, self-care and social understanding.

A developmental delay may also cause a child to reach physical milestones later — such as sitting up, crawling, and walking.

Developmental delays can be caused by a disability, exposure to a harmful substance, or for no obvious reason.

Some people associate developmental delays with mental retardation, but this is not always the case.

mostly by interacting with toys, objects and people, but also by observing others.

3. Pay attention to developmental delays such as rolling over, sitting-up, or crawling. Developmental delays have many causes — genetics, brain injury, sensory impairments, or exposure to harmful substances — but in many cases, the cause is unknown.

Three important facts about developmental delays:

- 1. A developmental delay can affect a child's thinking, memory, problem solving, and understanding of cause and effect.** Physical delays can also occur.
- 2. Children learn by doing.** Infants and toddlers use all of their senses to learn. Babies watch toys and people, and listen and feel objects with their hands and their mouth. Toddlers and preschoolers learn

Sometimes a child simply needs help in figuring out how to perform certain tasks, or how to change his/her behavior.

Parents are usually first to notice when their child doesn't seem to be learning like other children.

They may notice the child isn't as interested in toys as other children, or does not seem to be talking like other children.

Parents should always trust their instincts if they feel that something is not right. Parents know their child better than anyone else.

Ways to help your child:

ONE

Create routines for daily activities, including diapering, feeding, bedtime, etc. These routines will increase your child's memory, learning, and overall understanding.

TWO

Talk to your child constantly. Describe what you're doing during daily routines, and explain objects, sights and sounds to your child. Every time you add spoken words to activities, you increase your child's capacity to learn.

Resources:

Call **Early Access** at 1-888-IAKIDS1 if you have child development questions or concerns.

Link to an **Area Education Agency** in your region for more child and family information:

www.iowaaea.org. Find a contact for your area under the **AEA Directory** tab.

Visit **Health of Children** for basic information on cognitive development and developmental milestones.

ZeroToThree provides tips on how to help your child develop physical, social, language and thinking skills.

The **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** has a variety of ideas and activities for families that want to make learning fun.

This factsheet is part of an informational series for parents of children ages 0-5, developed by the Iowa Department of Education Early Childhood Services Bureau. (Updated April 2010)

THREE

Keep track of your child's overall development. Take your infant to regular check-ups, as well as vision and hearing screenings. If your child seems to be missing milestones, contact your doctor.

FOUR

If you suspect your child may have a developmental delay, contact **Early Access** (see Resources). If your child is three or older, contact your local elementary school, or the Area Education Agency (AEA).