

# Helping your child develop motor skills



## What are motor skills?

Motor skills are when your child learns to control and use their muscles to move. Each child develops motor skills at different times. Watch your child carefully as they learn new skills. Protect them from falls and injuries as they learn. Do not leave your child alone.

## What can I do to help my child learn new motor skills?

You can help your child when you:

- Spend time with them and watch what they can do. Play with your child, and teach them to do new things. Help them learn new movements and skills as they grow.
- Once your child learns how to do something new, give them time to practice the new movements and skills.
- Praise your child for trying something new, even if they have not quite learned it yet.

Child's age	How you can help
Birth to 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Place your child on their tummy during playtime several times each day. Make sure someone watches them closely. Play with them if they get fussy.</li><li>• Hold your child often. Limit time they spend in positioning equipment (like infant swings and carriers).</li><li>• Give them your finger or a rattle to hold. Help your child bring the rattle to their mouth and switch it from hand to hand.</li><li>• Shake rattles in front of your child so they look to the left and right.</li></ul>
4 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep giving your child playtime on their tummy and on the floor.</li><li>• Help them roll over from their belly to their back and back to their belly again.</li><li>• Place toys on the ground slightly out of reach to help your child start creeping.</li><li>• Hold them in a sitting position, and have them use their arms to hold themselves up.</li><li>• Hold your child in a standing position so they push down on their legs.</li></ul>
7 to 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give your child push-button toys that light up or play a song. This teaches them that their actions can cause things to happen.</li><li>• Place them in a sitting position. Hold or support them if needed.</li><li>• Place pillows on the floor, and have your child crawl over them.</li></ul>

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Helping your child develop motor skills, continued

Child's age	How you can help
7 to 9 months (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice holding them in a standing position to encourage them to stand and bounce with flat feet.</li> <li>• Roll a ball, and play catch with your child.</li> </ul>
10 to 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place toys that your child likes just out of reach. This helps them learn to stand and walk.</li> <li>• Give your child large, sturdy toys they can push while they walk. Watch them closely.</li> <li>• Put a toy in each of your child's hands, and help your child bang them together.</li> </ul>
13 to 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your child build towers made of blocks.</li> <li>• Help them point at pictures in books.</li> <li>• Have your child pick up toys off the ground to practice squatting and standing.</li> <li>• Give them toys to pull behind them.</li> <li>• Teach your child to eat with a spoon.</li> <li>• Teach them to drink from a cup.</li> </ul>
18 months to 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach your child to jump on flat, even surfaces.</li> <li>• Then, teach them to jump over small objects.</li> <li>• Help your child learn to kick a ball.</li> <li>• Play chase to encourage them to run.</li> <li>• Have your child practice going up and down stairs with your help.</li> <li>• Teach them how to hold a large crayon. Have him scribble on paper.</li> </ul>
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your child practice going up and down stairs without your help.</li> <li>• Play catch with them. Use different sized soft balls.</li> <li>• Teach your child to pedal a tricycle.</li> <li>• Teach your child to cut paper with safety scissors. Help them until they learn how to do it on their own.</li> </ul>
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give your child opportunities to take part in dance, swimming, gymnastics or sports.</li> <li>• Make an obstacle course to practice running, jumping, hopping and balancing.</li> </ul>

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## Where can I get help?

If you think your child has delays in their motor skills:

- Call your child's doctor right away. Your child may need some tests to find the cause. The sooner your child gets help, the sooner something can be done to help with the problem and prevent more delays.
- If you have any other questions or concerns about your child's motor skills, talk with the doctor. You may also call the Rehabilitation Services department at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at this phone number: \_\_\_\_\_.

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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