Developmental milestones
Checkpoints on your child’s path
Every child develops differently. But there are certain milestones along the way that are signs of typical development in most children. These are not deadlines for your child to meet. These milestones occur within approximate age ranges as your child develops. Look at them as checkpoints that show your child is developing the right way in how he speaks, plays, behaves and moves.

It is important to be aware of these milestones. Early detection and intervention for developmental problems is the best way to make sure your child stays on track. Pediatric-trained therapists can help when a child is behind.

Knowing where your child needs to be is the first step. Here are a few developmental milestones at their corresponding ages.

**At 6 months, your child may:**

- Recognize familiar faces.
- Respond to caregivers.
- String together vowel sounds (like “ah” or “oh”).
- Begin to make consonant sounds (like jabbering with “m” and “b”).
- Bring things to his mouth.
- Follow a moving toy with his eyes.
- Reach and grasp for toys.
- Roll over from front to back and back to front.
- Begin to sit without support.
- Begin to put weight on his legs.

**Contact your pediatrician if your child:**

- Shows no affection for caregivers.
- Is not holding anything.
- Is not making any sounds.
- Has stiff or floppy muscles.
At 1 year, your child may:

- Be shy or nervous around strangers or in some situations.
- Have favorite toys, people or things.
- Play games like “peek-a-boo” and “patty cake.”
- Respond to simple spoken requests.
- Say words like “mama,” “dada,” “uh-oh” and “bye bye.”
- Explore things in new ways—like shaking, dumping and banging.
- Copy the gestures of caregivers.
- Take things out of a container and put things back in.
- Sit up from a lying down position.
- Pull up and take a few steps while holding onto furniture.

Contact your pediatrician if your child:

- Doesn’t poke or point with his index finger.
- Doesn’t say single words.
- Is not interested in moving.
- Is not able to move across his environment.
At 18 months, your child may:

• Show affection to people he's familiar with.
• Play simple pretend, like feeding a doll.
• Have a vocabulary of about 10-20 single words.
• Be able to insert two simple shapes (like squares and circles) into a puzzle.
• Point to get attention or to show what he wants.
• Follow a verbal command, like “sit down.”
• Walk alone.
• Start walking up steps.
• Start to run.
• Say and shake his head “no.”

Contact your pediatrician if your child:

• Doesn’t copy the gestures or sounds of others.
• Doesn’t have a vocabulary of about 10 single words.
• Doesn’t respond when a caregiver leaves or returns.
• Can’t walk.

At 2 years, your child may:

• Want to do more things on his own.
• Begin to include other children in play, like in chase games.
• Name a few familiar people and parts of the body.
• Speak in two- or three-word phrases, like “bye-bye mommy” and “birdie go fly.”
• Turn thick book pages one at a time.
• Copy straight lines.
• Build towers of six or more blocks.
• Follow instructions with two steps, like “get your sweater and put it on.”
• Run well and begin to jump.
• Be able to throw and kick a ball.

Contact your pediatrician if your child:

• Doesn’t use two-word phrases, like “drink milk.”
• Doesn’t follow simple instructions.
• Doesn’t walk steadily.
• Doesn’t make eye contact.
At 3 years, your child may:

- Show affection and concern for friends.
- Easily separate from mom and dad.
- Be toilet trained.
- Follow instructions with two or three steps.
- Talk well enough for strangers to usually understand.

- Carry on a conversation with two or three sentences.
- Copy a circle.
- Jump forward about two feet with feet together.
- Use a spoon and fork.
- Walk up and down stairs with one foot on each step.

Contact your pediatrician if your child:

- Doesn’t want to play with toys or other children.
- Doesn’t speak in sentences.
- Doesn’t play pretend or make believe.
- Has clumsy or uncoordinated movement.
At 4 years, your child may:

• Prefer to play with other children than by himself.
• Take turns when playing games with other children.
• Know the basic rules of grammar, like correct pronoun use.
• Tell stories.
• Name some colors and numbers.

Contact your pediatrician if your child:

• Can’t retell a favorite story.
• Speaks unclearly.
• Resists dressing, sleeping or using the toilet.
• Is unable to climb stairs or jump.

At 5 years, your child may:

• Use scissors to cut shapes.
• Complete a jigsaw puzzle with 9–12 pieces.
• Hop in place and balance on one foot for two seconds.
• Dress and undress himself.
• Throw, kick and catch balls well.

Contact your pediatrician if your child:

• Be more likely to understand the rules in games, sports and daily life.
• Be aware of gender.
• Speak very clearly.
• Be able to tell a story using full sentences.
• Draw a person with at least six body parts.

• Print some numbers and letters, including his first name.
• Be able to do a somersault.
• Hop, gallop and skip.
• Be able to participate in organized sports.
• Swing and climb.
We have experts trained to help

If you are concerned about the development of your child, don’t wait. Ask your pediatrician about a referral to Children’s. We have pediatric-trained experts that offer a wide-range of rehabilitation services to help your child develop properly.

Our services are available at nine convenient locations. Our therapists use age-appropriate play and equipment with children to help them reach their milestones. They also take time to educate you, the parent, about what your child needs and how you can help at home. Children have better outcomes when the whole family is involved.

Visit choa.org/outpatientrehab or call 404-785-7100 for more information.

Adapted from “Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5” and “Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents” by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Other sources include:
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) 0-3
- HELP 3-6