

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT – EARLY YEARS

Children start to develop in the womb. Once born, development really gets going. We often think of development as being to do with physical development—how the baby starts to use his or her muscles—the big ones in the arms, legs, back, etc, and the little ones, such as in our fingers. But at the same time, babies are developing socially and emotionally — by getting to know and love their parents,. Intellectual development seems to be last on the list, although it can be hard to separate out the different bits of development. For instance, babies need to hear us speaking, because they start to store bits of information about how speech works right from the start.

Babies are born with 100 BILLION brain cells. That’s a lot. And each brain cell can link up with other cells. In fact if every cell was connected up, the number of connections would be more than there are atoms in the universe!! And babies brains are ready to take in huge amounts of information—(they are “experience junkies!)-everything we parents do gets stored and connected. In fact babies use half their food intake on their brains. (By the way, brain development goes on till we are about 21 or 22 years old).

What we can do that helps our childrens’ development (in no order of importance):

- Speak to them a lot, even when we are giving our children basic care, like changing a nappy.
- Give our babies opportunities to use their muscles
- Play music, sing songs, right from the start.
- Taking a delight in our children, and smiling.
- Be able to understand our children, and their needs, and be able to meet those needs.
- Give lots of experiences, and talk about them. It does not matter if when children are very young, that they do not understand the words. They will soon.
- Have regular routines, but be able to be flexible as well, if necessary.
- Be encouraging, use praise a lot. Children love this and it does wonders for their confidence. It also helps if we practice noticing the good things our children do, and talk about them. Sometimes we can be too good at noticing the less good stuff.

Here are some ideas about how children grow from when they are born till age 5. It is important to remember that different children develop in different ways. If you get worried about how your child is developing, ask your Health Visitor, and she will be able to offer advice.

| Age | Physical | Intellectual | Emotional | Social |
|-----------|---|---|--|--|
| 1 month | Can see, hear, feel, taste and smell at birth. Uses reflexes. | Cries to communicate. Limited interest in learning. | Startled by loud sounds. | Likes soft, high pitched voices. |
| 2 months | Focuses eyes. Eats every 3-4 hours. | Follows light or objects with eyes | Reacts to distress by crying | Smiles |
| 3 months | Holds head up | Recognises mother or primary caregiver | | Coos and gurgles |
| 4 months | Tries to grab with hands. Tries to roll over | Can use eyes and hands together | Cries different ways for different reasons | Laughs out loud |
| 6 months | Sits with supports | Reaches for and grasps objects | Show signs of fear, anger, or disgust. Laughs and chuckles | Tries to talk to image in the mirror |
| 8 months | Sits alone | Transfers objects form hand to hand. Puts objects in mouth | | Responds to name. Pats their image in the mirror. |
| 10 months | Creeps or crawls | Can pick up small objects | Seeks attention by yelling. May show shyness, fear of strangers. | Plays peek-a-boo |
| 12 months | Eats 3 meals. Has tripled birth weight and grown about 10 inches. Drinks from a cup. Stands and takes steps | Says one or two words. Points to desired objects. Imitates animals. | Shows controlled anger directed towards a person or a thing | Waves good-bye. Plays pat-a-cake. Can co-operate. Will respond more to adults than other infants |

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| 18 months | Can throw objects. Walks upstairs with hand held | Drinks unaided. Is curious. Can say no. Understands words | Shows affection. Selfish. Cries when toys are taken away. | Tends to be rebellious. Points to objects. |
| 2-3 years | Can control bowels and toilet trained by day. Eats easily with a spoon. Can run. Jumps with two feet together. Can balance on one foot. Can climb upstairs on foot after the other. Skilled climber Can use a tricycle. Holds pencil with fingers. Co-ordinated use of hands. Can build a tower of 6-7 toy bricks | Uses 3 or 4 word sentences. Enjoys simple songs and rhymes. Can initiate own play. Uses memory to learn things. Enjoys counting. Growing understanding of the weather/ seasons. Has a vocabulary of several hundred words. Can ask questions | Shows pity, sympathy and shame. Likes praise. Can share toys. Can share emotions. Beginning to need other children to play with. Understands personal worth. Laughs, squeals and has temper tantrums. | Enjoys pretend play. Mother is still important and has difficulties with strangers. Likes helping adults. Enjoys playing alone. Enjoys having children around but doesn't necessarily play with them. Pushes and bites when angry |
| 3-4 years | Can dress themselves. Can do a big jump. | Starting to know right from wrong. Uses imagination in play, role-play and pretend play. Curious and inquisitive. Draws picture and names it when completed. Has an understanding of the size and weight of objects. Draws circles and crosses. Draws a person with two parts. Asks questions. Sticking up for themselves. Understands colours. Understands over, under longer and shorter. Has a 1500 word vocabulary | Affectionate to parents. Likes to please adults. Needs approval, loves and praise. Growing imagination- fear of dark, animals etc. Likes to share. Developing independence and self-reliance. Sensitive to the feelings of other people towards them. | Can play co-operatively. Has identity with same sex parent. Jealous of same sex parent. Boys like boy things/ girls like girl things. Has imaginary friend. Can do as asked. Readiness to respond to the spoken word. Understands taking turns/ sharing. Uses language to resist. Can toilet self during the day. Plays with others. Fears loss of parents |
| 4-5 years | Skips, skips alternating feet broad jumps and are very active. Constantly on the go. Can copy squares, draws people in three parts. Would rather talk or play than eat | Loves new words. Talks clearly. Uses adult sounds. Tells/relates to stories. Knows their age. Has a vocabulary of 2000 words. Knows what things are made of. Fascinated by silly sounds. Follows two or three commands. Likes to shock. Understands simple time concepts. Very curious. Talks a lot and enjoys humour. Able to think things through. Make mistakes. Uses colour names. Asks questions a lot. Understands numbers. Names common coins. Can use fairly long grammatically correct sentences. | Demands a lot. Threatens and name calls. Can be bossy/ belligerent. Will whine, cry and complain. Tests people. Boastful about their family or self. Has a desire to do right; may blame others for wrongdoing. Can feel pride in what had been done. | Really needs to play with others. Can be competitive. Has relationships that are stormy. Likes to pretend. Likes to imitate adults. Can share, accept rules and take turns. |