



HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Every child is unique, develops at their own pace, relates to the world in their own way, and has their own style of communication.

The first three years of life lay the foundations for healthy brain development and social-emotional development.

1. **Health, nutrition, and well-being of the mother** is significant for the child's development.
2. The three early childhood development domains include: **physical, social/emotional, and language/cognitive**
3. Children shape their **environments** as well as being shaped by them.
4. **Social determinants** shape brain and physical development through their influence on the qualities of stimulation, support, emotional and physical care provided to the child.
5. **Play** is critical for a child's overall development.

Physical, Social/Emotional, and Language/Cognitive Development

Early childhood development, particularly the first 3 years of life, shape future long-term development. Some ways you can enable healthy development include:

- Spending quality time with your child
- Playing with your child
- Healthy touch and physical contact (appropriate hugs and kisses)
- Sensory stimulation (nice smells, colors, calm and relaxing music, children's books, etc.)
- Early childhood education if possible

Play

Playing can support three key principles:

- Supporting responsive relationships
- Strengthening core life skills
- Reducing sources of stress

Health, Nutrition, and Well-being of the Mother

A mother's well-being and her physical and mental health before being pregnant and while pregnant can strengthen body systems that enable children to thrive and become healthy adults. Some ways to stay healthy and happy include:

- Eating a nutrition filled diet
- Having some form of physical exercise at least 2-3 times a week
- Going to the doctor for regular check-ups
- Seeking emotional and mental health support when needed



Social Determinants

- Safe and child-centered neighborhoods, communities, and villages can greatly affect early childhood.
- Preventative measures that can be taken to protect your child in the future include getting vaccines for the prevention of diseases and protecting children from violent and abusive environments.

Environment

- Bacteria and parasites, air pollutants, and other dangerous toxins can all disrupt healthy child development.
- Young children are more vulnerable to effects of environmental exposures.
- Because they do not have fully developed body systems, they are less able than adults to get rid of harmful environmental exposures.



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The first years from birth to three years, sets the stage for all future development.

Babies develop at their own rate, some learning quicker or slower than others, progress starting or stopping, and some stages being skipped or reversed.

From Birth to 6 months

- A newborn's eyes can only track 9-12 inches. Hold your baby this distance from your face so that they can see you.
- Lifts head briefly when placed on tummy (TIP: babies should only be on their tummies when awake)
- Anticipates feedings, shows excitement when seeking breast or bottle nipple
- Places both hands on breast and bottle when nursing
- Reaches toward dangling objects and people's faces, reaches for toy, moves toy from one hand to another
- Sit briefly without support

Between 6-12 months

- Learn to sit alone, crawl, pull up to stand and eventually take their first steps alone
- Pokes and points at things
- Using thumbs and fingertips, feeds self finger-foods
- Begin to learn how to use tools independently after shown how (e.g., using a spoon or fork to eat, drink out of a bottle, etc.)

Between 12-24 months

- Most toddlers are really growing in their ability to communicate. They will use gestures before they learn to use words for what they want.
- Climb low playground equipment, with supervision
- Start to develop a sense of awareness

What you can do

- Baby-proof your home and create safe areas for fun and exploration.
- Pillows and cushions are great obstacle courses.
- Babies love to move to music! Play some appropriate music for your baby.
- Feeding, bathing, and diapering are perfect times to talk to, sing to, and play with your baby.
- Read lots of story books.
- Help them to identify and label their feelings.
- Provide vocabulary words by describing whatever is happening.
- YOU are what your child needs most!



For additional information:

The Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development
www.msacd.emory.edu

Child Development Institute
www.childdevelopmentinfo.com

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

Georgia's Early Intervention Program (Babies Can't Wait)
www.bcw-bibs.com

World Health Organization (WHO): Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health
www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/en/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Child Development
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/index.html

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