



Marching to a different drum – developmental delay

Most children reach their development milestones in the same order and about the same time of life. Milestones are physical changes or behaviours that are signs of development such as rolling over, walking and talking.

Development delay is the term used when a child is slower to reach a milestone than other children (until the cause of the delay is identified). Delay may occur in the way a child moves, communicates, thinks and learns, or behaves with others.

Children with developmental delay continue to learn but they take longer to acquire new skills. They may also learn in different ways, for example, most children learn skills quickly and by example whereas children with developmental delay may need to be shown skills in smaller, simpler steps, and may need more practice.

Everyone is different

Keep an open mind; remember everyone is different. Wait and watch your child's progress for a while. However, you know your child better than anyone else. If you continue to worry, take your child to be checked.

Possible causes of delay

Hearing impairment

If your baby has a hearing impairment, they won't hear people speaking so you may notice they do not respond to your voice and other noises. As they get older, you may notice their speech and language are not developing like other children.

Hearing milestones for a typically developing baby

Birth to 4 months	Babies should startle at a loud noise and move their head or eyes towards the sound. If baby is upset, they should calm down from the sound of your voice
4-8 months	Babies should notice sounds around them, smile when spoken to, babble and understand simple words like 'bye-bye'
8-14 months	Babies should respond to their name, say simple words such as 'mama' and 'dada', copy simple sounds and use their voice to get attention
14-24 months	Children start to develop vocabulary, understand and follow simple instructions, and put two words together

Cerebral palsy

Cerebral palsy is a physical disability that makes it hard for children to control their muscles and movements. Each child will have different symptoms – some mild, some severe.

Babies with cerebral palsy might have:

- problems with feeding
- slow development, such as delays holding their heads up or sitting up
- unequal movements, such as taking no notice of one hand
- poor muscle control or low muscle tone
- muscle spasms or stiffness when you try to move their joints.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Autism spectrum disorder is a condition where the brain has not developed in a certain way. Children with ASD:

- often prefer the same routines
- show a lack of interest in other people, for example, many babies later diagnosed with ASD look at their parents while being held or during nappy changes
- may have very impressive skills and strengths
- show a narrow range of interests
- engage in repetitive activities
- can take longer than other children to learn language, and often find it hard to make sense of language.

Diagnosis of ASD is based on a child not reaching certain age-based developmental milestones, because there are no other physical characteristics of the condition.

Having a check-up

If you are concerned, consider contacting your local child health centre or your family doctor.

You may then be referred to more specialised testing or intervention. The team of professionals who might be involved in supporting you and your child includes your child health nurse, paediatrician, audiologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, psychologist, social worker, speech pathologist, and specialist teachers.



More information

The Queensland Government provides families with up-to-date information about approved early childhood education and care services in their local area, and has parent tip sheets on a range of topics.

To access the latest information or to find an early childhood education and care service call 13 QGOV* (13 74 68) or visit www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au.

For service ratings visit the MyChild website at www.mychild.gov.au or the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website at www.acecqa.gov.au.

Other languages

If you need an interpreter, phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

Assistance making a call

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment:

- TTY users phone 133 677*, then ask for 13 74 68*.
- Speak-and-listen users should phone 1300 555 727*, then ask for 13 74 68*
- Internet relay users should connect to the National Relay Service at www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx then ask for 13 74 68*.

Acknowledgement

The information in this publication was sourced from the Raising Children Network at www.raisingchildren.net.au

Disclaimer

This publication is offered as a guide and should not be considered an exhaustive statement on the subject.

*Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.