

Developmental Milestones: 2 Years Old (24 Months)

It is important to know that each child is unique and develops at his or her own pace. The developmental milestones listed below will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect during this year.

Social Development

- Imitates behavior of others, especially adults and older children
- Shares experiences with parents by bringing/showing toys
- More aware of self as separate from others
- More excited about company of siblings and other children
- May have an imaginary friend

Emotional Development

- Continues to show more independence
- Begins to show some defiant behavior and becomes upset and impatient easily
- May demonstrate anger by crying, screaming, or hitting
- Often wants or demands their own way
- Continues to assert self by saying "no"
- May revert to baby behavior at times
- May become upset when daily routines change
- Moods may fluctuate frequently

Cognitive (Thinking and Learning)/Play

- Finds objects even when hidden in complex spaces
- Learns to differentiate between "boys" and "girls"
- Begins to sort by shapes and colors
- Pretend play becomes increasingly more complex
- Loves dress up and pretending to be something else (i.e. animals, prince/princess, superhero, etc.)
- Often wants to "do it myself"
- Has difficulty with choosing between alternatives

Language/Communication

- Recognizes names of familiar people, objects, and body parts
- Uses simple phrases
- Begins to use sentences with anywhere from two to five words in them
- Follows simple instructions
- Repeats words overheard in conversation
- Begins to experiment with grammar

Movement

- Is constantly in motion and may tire easily
- Runs and Climbs

- Pulls toys behind him/her while walking
- Carries large toy or several toys while walking
- Stands on tiptoes
- Kicks a ball
- Climbs onto and down from furniture unassisted
- Walks up and down stairs holding on to support

Self Help Skills

- Begins to get dressed and undressed
- Begins having more awareness of dirty/wet diapers
- May show interest in potty training

Hand and Finger Skills

- Progresses from random scribbling to somewhat more controlled movements
- Turns over container to pour out contents
- When playing with blocks, will often build a tower of 3-5 blocks
- May begin to button and unbutton large buttons

Areas of Possible Concern 2 Years

Although each child develops at their own pace, failure to reach certain milestones may signal medical or developmental problems requiring special attention. If you notice any of the following warning signs in your child at this age, discuss them with your pediatrician.

- Fails to develop a mature heel-toe walking pattern after several months of walking, does not walk or walks only on his toes
- Does not speak at least 15 words by 2 – 2 ½ years
- Does not use two-word sentences by 2 ½ years
- Does not imitate actions or words by 2 years
- Does not follow simple instructions by 2 years
- Cannot push a wheeled toy
- Does not search for objects that are hidden
- Does not use gestures, such as waving or shaking head
- Doesn't seem to express much affection for the person who cares for him or her.
- Doesn't seem to enjoy being around people often cringing, crying, or resisting eye contact
- Does not point to objects or pictures
- Does not seem to know the function of common household objects (brush, telephone, fork, spoon)
- Does not respond when others call him/her by name
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he or she once had

Healthy Development 3 years old (36 months)

Children are unique and develop at their own pace. The developmental milestones listed below will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect by the end of this year.

Social Development

- Imitates behavior of others, especially adults and older children
- Spontaneously show affection for familiar friends
- Awareness of self as separate from others
- Can take turns in games
- Understands the concept of "mine" and "his/hers"
- Tends to idolize parents
- Tests limits constantly
- Develops concept of sharing
- May have an imaginary friend
- May argue with other children

Emotional Development

- Overall, becomes more relaxed and flexible although may still become upset when daily routines change
- At times, may demonstrate anger by crying, screaming, or hitting
- May revert to baby behavior at times
- Moods may fluctuate frequently
- Expresses affection openly
- Expresses a wide range of emotions
- Will sometimes resist major changes in routine

Cognitive (Thinking and Learning)/Play

- Is able to understand that an object in their environment matches one in a book
- Develops a more stable concept of self
- Knows colors
- Loves dress up and pretending to be something else (i.e. animals, prince/princess, superhero, etc.)
- Enjoys pretend play with dolls, trucks, cars, animals, and people
- Puts toys away with adult help
- Is capable of choosing between alternatives
- Understands concept of "one" and "two"

Physical

- Is able to hop, run, skip, and climb!
- Is able to ride a tricycle
- May be able to pour drinks out of a carton using both hands
- Is able to make simple designs and draws recognizable objects
- Undresses self but may need help dressing
- Can button and unbutton large buttons
- Kicks balls
- Is toilet trained during the day and night by the age of 4

Language/Communication

- Speaks about 1,000 words
- Begins to use and understand pronouns
- Grasps a few simple grammar rules
- Follows a two or three part command (i.e. Go get your shoes and meet me downstairs)
- Understands most sentences
- Understands placement in space (i.e. "on", "in", "under")
- Uses 4 to 5 word sentences
- Knows their name, age, and sex
- Uses pronouns (I, you, me, we, they) and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)

Hand and Finger Skills

- Is able to draw up-an-down, side-to-side, and circular lines with pencil or crayon
- Turns book pages one at a time
- Builds a tower of more than six blocks
- Is able to hold a pencil in the correct position
- Screws and unscrews jar lids, nuts, and bolts
- Knows how to turn rotating handles

Possible Areas of Concern 3 years

Although children develop at their own rate, failure to reach certain milestones may signal medical or developmental problems requiring special attention. If you notice any of the following warning signs in your child at this age, discuss them with your pediatrician.

- Acts extremely fearful, timid, or aggressively
- Is unable to separate from parents without major protest
- Does not respond to people in general, including when others call his/her name
- Rarely or never uses fantasy or imitation in play
- Seems unhappy or sad much of the time
- Doesn't engage in a variety of activities
- Doesn't express a wide range of emotions
- Has trouble eating or sleeping
- Can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality
- Can't correctly give first and last name
- Seems uncomfortable holding a crayon or pencil
- Frequent falling and difficulty with stairs
- Persistent drooling or very unclear speech
- Cannot build a tower of more than four blocks
- Cannot copy a circle
- Cannot communicate in short phrases
- Does not understand simple instructions
- Little or no interest in other children
- Poor eye contact
- Often does things over and over in the same way
- Limited interest in toys
- Engages in repetitive activities such as lining up toys, repeating play sequences or vocalizations, running in circles, and flapping hands or arms

- Has difficulty shifting away from preferred routines and activities
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he or she once had

Healthy Development

4 years old (48 months)

Children are unique and develop at their own pace. The developmental milestones listed below will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect by the end of this year.

Social Development

- Takes great interest in new experiences
- Increasingly creative in pretend play and will often want to play "Mom" or "Dad"
- Begins to demonstrate basic problem solving skills
- Continues to test parental limits and boundaries
- Will often explore the use of "bad" words to get a reaction from others
- Able to participate in simple group activities
- Talks to another child but will not listen to what the other child says
- Is cooperative with other children although may still find it difficult to share
- Becomes aware of gender role differences
- Plays in groups of children

Emotional Development

- May become preoccupied with "monsters" at nighttime
- May regress to baby behavior periodically
- Shows awareness of new fears and dangers, often involving safety issues
- Enjoys being silly

Cognitive (Thinking and Learning)/Play

- Has a vocabulary of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 words
- Is able to count to 5
- Can identify most shapes
- Begins to understand the basic concept of time (i.e. yesterday, today, tomorrow)
- Asks endless "why" questions
- Usually can put toys and materials away without adult assistance
- May or may not be able to tell the difference between reality and fantasy
- Loves dress up and pretending to be something else (i.e. animals, prince/princess, superhero, etc.)
- Plays out complex pretend scenarios with dolls, truck, cars, animals and people
- Begins to understand the difference between "right" and "wrong"
- May tend to exaggerate when telling stories because cannot always distinguish between honesty and dishonesty
- Is unable to understand the concept that other people have viewpoints and can only see life through his/her own eyes

Physical

- Is able to hop, somersault, swing, run, skip, and climb!
- Can stand on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
- May be accident prone
- Enjoys making loud noises but may become frightened by unexpected loud sounds

- Is able to go to the bathroom independently
- Is able to make simple designs and draws recognizable objects
- Dresses self but still usually still needs help putting shoes on
- Goes upstairs and downstairs without support
- Kicks, throws, and bounces balls
- Moves forward and backward with agility

Language/Communication

- Has knowledge of basic grammar rules
- Speaks in sentences of five to six words
- Speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand
- Tells simple stories
- Is able to retell daily experiences

Hand and Finger Skills

- Is able to draw certain shapes
- Is able to draw simple pictures of people often having anywhere from two to four body parts
- Uses scissors
- May begin to copy some letters

Areas of Possible Concern 4 years

Although children develop at their own rate, failure to reach certain milestones may signal medical or developmental problems requiring special attention. If you notice any of the following warning signs in your child at this age, discuss them with your pediatrician.

- Cannot throw a ball overhand
- Cannot jump in place
- Cannot ride a tricycle
- Cannot grasp a crayon between thumb and fingers and has difficulty scribbling
- Cannot stack four blocks
- Still clings or cries whenever parents leave
- Shows no interest in interactive games
- Ignores other children
- Doesn't respond to people outside the family
- Doesn't engage in fantasy play
- Resists dressing, sleeping, using the toilet
- Lashes out without any self-control when angry or upset
- Cannot copy simple shapes
- Doesn't use sentences of more than three words
- Doesn't use "me" and "you" correctly
- Poor eye contact
- Often does things over and over in the same way
- Limited interest in toys
- Engages in repetitive activities such as lining up toys, repeating play sequences or vocalizations, running in circles, and flapping hands or arms
- Has difficulty shifting away from preferred routines and activities

Healthy Development 5 years old (60 months)

Children are unique and develop at their own pace. The developmental milestones listed below will give you a general idea of the changes you can expect by the end of this year.

Social Development

- Is able to follow rules and regulations
- May tattle, name-call, hit or shove at times
- Is aware of gender and gender differences
- Is able to cooperate in simple group tasks
- Learns to take turns during playing and speaking
- Gets along with other children, often aiming to please friends
- Wants to be like her friends
- May enjoy singing, dancing, and acting
- Enjoys family activities
- Shows more independence
- Engages in elaborate dramatic play both alone and with other children

Emotional Development

- Is able to verbally express feelings and emotions (i.e. "I'm mad," "I'm happy, etc.")
- May experience feelings of embarrassment as a result of not quite comprehending how to laugh at self
- May become aware of or ask questions about death
- Begins to show signs of guilt
- Becomes increasingly independent and more dependable
- Is able to distinguish between fantasy and reality
- Moods will often change from between being very demanding to being eagerly cooperative

Cognitive (Thinking and Learning)/Play

- Begins to recognize letters and words
- Is able to remain with one activity for a long period of time
- Begins showing interest in board games
- Has developed an overall image of self
- Is very interested in wanting to know facts and often asks, "Why?"
- Is able to comprehend "left" and "right" from their own perspective
- Is able to assist with household chores
- Can count 10 or more objects
- Correctly names all colors
- Knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, appliances)
- Is able to identify coins
- Understands concepts of morning, afternoon, night, yesterday, today and tomorrow

Physical

- Shows left or right-handedness
- Is able to build elaborate structures with building blocks, Legos, etc.
- Eats and dresses independently
- Uses the bathroom independently
- Enjoys active games and movement
- Is able to stand on one foot for a brief period of time

- Hops, skips, and somersaults
- Swings and climbs

Language/Communication

- Is able to recall and tell a story of experience
- Speaks sentences of more than five words
- Is able to use past and future tense
- Can repeat name, address, and phone number

Hand and Finger Skills

- Is able to copy shapes
- Is able to draw a simple person drawing
- Prints some letters
- Uses fork, spoon, and (sometimes) a table knife
- Usually cares for own bathroom needs

Areas of Possible Concern 5 years

Although children develop at their own rate, failure to reach certain milestones may signal medical or developmental problems requiring special attention. If you notice any of the following warning signs in your child at this age, discuss them with your pediatrician.

- Acts extremely fearful or timid
- Acts extremely aggressively
- Is unable to separate from parents without major protest
- Is easily distracted and unable to concentrate on any single activity for more than five minutes
- Shows little or no interest in playing with other children
- Poor eye contact
- Often does things over and over in the same way
- Limited interest in toys
- Engages in repetitive activities such as lining up toys, repeating play sequences or vocalizations, running in circles, and flapping hands or arms
- Has difficulty shifting away from preferred routines and activities
- Rarely uses fantasy or imitation in play
- Seems unhappy or sad much of the time
- Doesn't engage in a variety of activities
- Avoids or seems aloof with other children and adults
- Doesn't express a wide range of emotions
- Has trouble eating, sleeping, or using the toilet
- Can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality
- Seems unusually passive
- Cannot follow two-part commands
- Can't correctly give her first and last name
- Doesn't use plurals or past tense properly when speaking
- Doesn't talk about her daily activities and experiences
- Cannot build a tower of six to eight blocks
- Has trouble dressing or undressing
- Cannot wash and dry hands
- Does not have a friend their age.