YOUR CHILD’S HEALTHY GROWTH AND THE SIGNS OF AUTISM
A child’s growth is more than physical. Children grow, develop, and learn throughout their lives, starting at birth. You can follow a child’s development by watching how he or she plays, learns, speaks, and behaves.

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WHERE TO START...

Learn what to look for. Skills like smiling for the first time, taking a first step, and waving “bye bye” are important developmental milestones. There are many more things to watch for by specific times in your child’s early years. If a child does not reach these milestones at the same time as other children the same age, it signals a possible developmental delay.

DON'T WAIT. TIME WON'T TELL...

If you see signs of a delay, invariably some well-intended person may say, “Don’t worry, he’ll grow out of it.” Most of the time, a child will not grow out of a developmental delay on his or her own. Nonetheless with help – the earlier in life the better – your child can reach his or her full potential.

HOW TO KNOW...

The only way to be sure is to have your child screened. There is no blood test or instrument reading to detect developmental milestones. Doctors and nurses use developmental screening to tell if children are learning basic skills when they should, or if they have problems. A developmental screening will help you understand if your child truly has a delay and, if so, help his/her doctor and you develop a treatment regimen to meet your child’s needs.

TRACKING YOUR CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

17 percent of children in the U.S. have a developmental or behavioral disability such as autism, mental retardation, or Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Research has shown that early and intensive intervention by age three has a dramatic impact on reducing symptoms and increasing a child’s ability to grow and learn new skills.

AUTISM IS...

a neurological disorder that affects a child’s ability to communicate and interact socially. It typically appears in the first three years of life, and its impact can range from mild to severe. Autism, which includes Asperger Syndrome and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) under its umbrella, is diagnosed four times more frequently in boys than in girls. It occurs in as many as 1 in every 150 births resulting in an estimated 1.7 million children and adults with autism in the United States. For those diagnosed and their families, autism is a lifelong challenge.

DID YOU KNOW...

• The cause of autism is still unknown
• There is clear evidence that autism is on the rise
• It is estimated to occur in as many as 1 in 150 births
• It affects boys more than girls by a 4:1 ratio
• It has no social, ethnic, or geographic bounds
• Research has shown that Latino children with autism are diagnosed almost two years later than children from most other ethnicities and races
ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL...

It is often said that no two children with autism are the same. That’s basically true. Children with autism may have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills, each to varying degrees. Some might repeat certain behaviors; others might not want change in their daily activities. Many have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. There are telltale indicators, but no set list of common factors.

* It is sign of developmental delay and possibly autism. Ask for a referral and have your child screened
* Note: Contact your child’s doctor or nurse if your child experiences a dramatic loss of skills at any age.

**Normal**
- Watches faces
- Begins to babble
- Enjoys playing with other people

**Red Flags**
- Doesn’t respond to loud noises
- Doesn’t follow moving objects with eyes
- Can’t hold head up
7 Months

**Normal**
- Turns head when hears her/his name
- Smiles with other people
- Repeats sounds
- Plays “peek-a-boo”

**Red Flags**
- Doesn’t turn head toward sounds
- Doesn’t babble or laugh
- Doesn’t roll over
- Doesn’t cuddle

1 Year

**Normal**
- Makes simple gestures (waves bye bye or arms up for UP)
- Shows preferences (for people, toys)
- Pulls up to standing position
- Says ma-ma or da-da
- Finds hidden objects
- Is shy with strangers
- Feeds self
- Imitates

**Red Flags**
- Doesn’t crawl
- No single words
- No gestures or pointing
**2 Years**

**Normal**
- Is more excited about other children
- Shows independence
- Says several single words and phrases
- Follows simple instructions
- Walks alone
- Begins to run, kick a ball, climb on furniture

**Red Flags**
- By 15 months doesn’t know function of household objects (cup, phone, etc.)
- Cannot walk by 18 months
- Does not use 2 word sentences by age 2

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**3 Years**

**Normal**
- Shows affection for playmates
- Speaks 4 and 5 word sentences
- Plays pretend (feed a teddy bear)

**Red Flags**
- Cannot communicate in short phrases
- Difficulty separating from mother
- Not interested in other children
- No pretend play
WHAT NEXT?

If your child is right on track

There are simple things you can do to maximize your child’s development:

- Allow opportunities to play with other children
- Provide a variety of experiences
- Involve her/him in everyday events
- Talk/sing to her/him
- Read stories
- Cuddle

If you’re concerned

Talk to your doctor about your concerns
Ask for a developmental screening
Request referral information

Normal

- Strangers can understand speech
- Follows 3 step commands
- Throws a ball overhand
- Dresses and undresses
- Names colors
- Counts

Red Flags

- Ignores other children
- Doesn’t use “me” and “you” correctly
- Resists dressing, sleeping, using the toilet

To find out who to speak to in your area, you can contact the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities by logging on to www.nichcy.org/ or calling 1-800-695-0285.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has links to information for families on their Autism Information Center Web page:

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dd/aic/resources