

Typical Early Childhood Development and “Red Flags”

The following are typical developmental milestones for children by age range:

- **By 3-4 months**
 - Watches faces with interest and follows moving objects
 - Recognizes familiar objects and people; smiles at the sound of your voice
 - Begins to develop a social smile
 - Turns head toward sounds

- **By 7 Months**
 - Responds to other people's emotions
 - Enjoys face-to-face play; can find partially hidden objects
 - Explores with hands and mouth; struggles for out of reach objects
 - Responds to own name
 - Uses voice to express joy and displeasure; babbles chains of sounds

- **By 12 Months/1 Year**
 - Enjoys imitating people; tries to imitate sounds
 - Enjoys simple social games, such as “gonna get you!”
 - Explores objects; finds hidden objects
 - Responds to “no;” uses simple gestures, such as pointing to an object
 - Babbles with changes in tone; may use single words (“dada,” “mama,” “Uh-oh!”)
 - Turns to person speaking when his/her name is called.

- **By 24 Months/2 Years**
 - Imitates behavior of others; is excited about company of other children
 - Understands several words
 - Finds deeply hidden objects; points to named pictures and objects
 - Begins to sort by shapes and colors; begins simple make-believe play
 - Recognizes names of familiar people and objects; follows simple instructions
 - Combines two words to communicate with others, such as “more cookie?”

- **By 36 Months/3 Years**
 - Expresses affection openly and has a wide range of emotions
 - Makes mechanical toys work; plays make-believe
 - Sorts objects by shape and color, matches objects to pictures

- **By 48 Months/4 Years**
 - Cooperates with other children; is increasingly inventive in fantasy play
 - Names some colors; understands concepts of counting and time
 - Speaks in sentences of five to six words
 - Tells stories; speaks clearly enough for strangers to understand
 - Follows three-part commands; understands "same" and "different"

- **By 60 Months/5 Years**
 - Wants to be like his/her friends; likes to sing, dance, and act

- Is able to distinguish fantasy from reality
 - Shows increased independence
 - Can count 10 or more objects and correctly name at least four colors
 - Speaks in sentences of more than five words; tells longer stories
- The following "**red flags**" may indicate your child is at risk for an autism spectrum disorder. If your child exhibits any of the following, please don't delay in asking your pediatrician or family doctor for an evaluation:
 - No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by six months or thereafter
 - No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles or other facial expressions by nine months
 - No babbling by 12 months
 - No back-and-forth gestures such as pointing, showing, reaching or waving by 12 months
 - No words by 16 months
 - No meaningful, two-word phrases (not including imitating or repeating) by 24 months
 - Any loss of speech, babbling or social skills at any age
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that ***all children*** receive autism screening at 18 and 24 months of age, and the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers, Revised (M-CHAT-R) is one of the AAP's recommended tools. Additional early screening tools for toddlers include: the CHAT, Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition from Easter Seals, and the Autism Screening Questionnaire.
- The MCHAT-R screening tool is available for free online at: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/diagnosis/mchat> If the answers suggest your child is at risk for autism, you should consult with your doctor, who may also recommend that you consult with a pediatric psychologist and/or a developmental pediatrician.
- **What are Autism Spectrum Disorders?**
Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are characterized by social-interaction difficulties, communication challenges and a tendency to engage in repetitive behaviors. However, symptoms and their severity vary widely across these three core areas. Taken together, they may result in relatively mild challenges for someone on the high functioning end of the autism spectrum. For others, symptoms may be more severe, as when repetitive behaviors and lack of spoken language interfere with everyday life.
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/symptoms>
- Other Associated Medical Conditions:
 - Genetic disorders
 - Gastrointestinal disorders
 - Seizure disorders
 - Sleep dysfunction
 - Sensory issues
 - Pica