



**GETTING A GOOD START:
UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
VOLUME 1
(BIRTH- 5 YEARS)**

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*We reach backward to our parents and forward to our children
and through their children to a future we will never see, but
about which we need to care.*

—CARL JUNG

Swiss Psychoanalyst, 20th Century



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Chapter 1: Introduction

Most parents are concerned about whether or not their children are developing and progressing at a normal rate. When should my child crawl? When should she start speaking? At what age should he be walking? These are important questions that are commonly on a mother's mind. If the birth of a baby came with an instruction manual then it may be easy for parents to track observed changes in their children.

Although, there are established developmental milestones which are a set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that most children can do at a certain age range, each child develops differently. This is dependent on both environmental influence (exposure to a variety of experiences) and genetic predisposition.

There are stages of development that every child will reach in a sequential order. The main areas of development include:

- Physical Development (Physical Growth and Motor Development)
- Language Development
- Cognitive Development
- Socio-emotional Development



Chapter 1: Introduction

This volume attempts to clearly and distinctively highlight the developmental milestones for these areas along with their expected age of achievement for infants **(Birth to 5 years)**

It will also highlight recommendations that will help parents and caregivers maximize their child's development.

It has been researched that the 1st five years of a child's life are most important and determine good health, success in school, level of self-esteem and social skills. Poor upbringing in the early years of life results in feelings of dissatisfaction with life, poor relationships, learning difficulties, eating disorders, high rates of crime and violence, addiction and other related issues. These years are important because the brain grows rapidly making new neural connections that arise from the child's experiences.

With this in mind, it is paramount that intensive care is taken to develop the child physically, socially and cognitively, as these years determine to large degree the latter years of his/her life as an adult.

This guide will help you understand the changes that take place in your child, help you address these changes and consequently help you become a better parent.



Chapter 2: Physical Development - Physical growth

It is very important for newborns to get a healthy start with regard to their physical development.

In the first few days of life, most newborns lose 5-7% of their body weight before they master sucking, swallowing and digesting. At this point, they begin to grow rapidly, gaining 142-170g per week during the first month. Usually, they double their birth weight by 4 months and triple it by 1 year.

The average child grows two and half inches in height and gains between 2.5 and 3.2kg a year during this period. As your infant grows older, the percentage of increase in height and weight decreases with each additional year. As they approach 3 years, they slim down their trunks and their bodies lengthen losing their baby fat.

At birth, the brain is 25% of its adult weight while by 2 years, it grows to 75%. As an infant walks, talks, runs, shakes, smiles, frowns, and performs different actions, changes are ongoing in the brain.

Newborns spend from 16 to 20 hours asleep each day. Between the ages of one and four, total daily sleep time decreases to about 11 or 12 hours.

The importance of nutrition cannot be downplayed at this stage and will be discussed in chapter 6.



Physical Development- Motor Development

Most parents are eagerly waiting for the point when their infants will crawl, walk and run.

Motor development involves an infants ability to move and includes both *gross and fine motor skills*.

Gross motor skills relates to the movement of the arms and legs while fine motor skills relate to movement of the hands and fingers.



Gross Motor Skill



Fine Motor Skill



Gross Motor Development

This is implicated in a child's ability to walk, run, play sports etc.

Motor Skill	Expected Age of Achievement
Head erect and steady when held	6 weeks
Lifts self up by arms when prone	2 months
Rolls from side to side	2 Months
Rolls from back to side	4 months
Sits alone	7 months
Crawls	7 months
Stands alone	11 months
Walks without assistance, kicks ball , throws ball	12 months
Ascends stairs with assistance	16 months
Jumps up and down	23 Months
Walks backwards, descends the stairs with assistance, runs	2 years
Rides Tricycle , Ascends stairs without assistance, Bowel and bladder control (toilet training)	3 years
Hops on one foot, Descends stairs without assistance	4 years



Fine Motor Development

Fine motor skills are implicated in a child's ability to grasp, reach, hold objects as well as handedness and writing

Fine Motor Skills	Expected Age of Achievement
Reaches out and grasps objects	3-6 months
Picks up and eats finger foods, drinks from a cup, bangs hand on table	6-12 months
Feeds self using spoon and cup , Hand preference develops	1 -2 years
Builds tower out of blocks and molds clay into shape, copies to draw a line, copies O and + , can unscrew jar lid and turns door knob, strings 4 large beads	2-3 years
Cuts paper with scissors, Uses large writing tools e.g. crayons, pencils, unbuttons dress	3-4 years
Draws stick figures with head, body and legs, strings and laces shoelaces, copies a square, writes first name	4 -5 years



Chapter 3: Language Development

Expressive language

Babies produce sounds immediately after birth which serve the purpose of calling the attention of caregivers and others in the environment. During the first year, they use sounds and gestures to express themselves.

Speech/Language Behavior Observed	Expected age of achievement
Makes sounds indicating pleasure, cries differently to express needs	0 to 3 months
Laugh, babble, mimic sounds	3 to 6 months
First words, repeat sounds, use most consonant and vowel sounds	9 to 12 months
Gesture and speak 'no', ask for help with gestures and sounds	12 to 15 months
Use 10-20 words, 20-25% of speech is intelligible by others	15 to 18 months
Use 3-word sentences, 50-70 % of speech is intelligible	18 to 24 months
200 to 400 word vocabulary, word for almost everything, answer "what" questions	2 to 3 years
900-1000 word vocabulary, use pronouns correctly, use three to 6-word sentences	3 to 4 year olds
1,500-2,500 word vocabulary, use 6 to 8 word sentences	4 to 5 years old



Language Development

Receptive language

In communicating with babies, they also exhibit certain receptive language behaviors at different ages as seen below

Speech/Language Behavior Observed	Expected age of Achievement
Turns head to caregiver and smiles when spoken to	0 to 3 months
Responds to the word “no” and responds to changes with tone of voice	4 to 6 months
Listens when spoken to, recognizes names of objects, first word	7 to 12 months
Understands about 50 words but may not be able to say them	13 months
Speak 50 words	18 months
Speak 200 words	2 years
Understand two part commands and understand contrasting words	2 to 3 years
Understand most of what they hear	3 to 5 years



Chapter 4: Cognitive Development

Cognitive development of a child relates to the child's ability to think, and understand the world around. This aspect of development is central to the child's ability to learn. The table below highlights the different cognitive milestones and the expected age of achieving them.

Cognitive developmental Milestone	Expected Age of Achievement
Pays attention to faces, recognizes people from a distance and follows objects with eyes	2 months
Hand eye co-ordination begins to develop, stares at own hands	4 months
Bangs two cubes in a bid to compare	8 months
Object permanence develops (understanding that objects continue to exist even when not in sight),	9 months
Points to pictures in books, receptive language more advanced than expressive language	12 months
Learns through imitating complex behavior, knows objects are used for specific purposes	15 months
Memory span comprises of 2 digits	2- 3 years
Capacity for symbolic thought (mentally representing objects not present) develops, belief that inanimate objects possess life-like qualities.	2 – 4 years



Chapter 5: Socio-emotional Development

This relates to the development of emotions, social skills and personality in children

Socio-emotional indicants	Expected age of Achievement
Smile triggered by changes in nervous system	1 month
Smile triggered by external objects or people	2-3 months
Social smile in response to others facial expression	4 months
Experiences anxiety in face of an unfamiliar face, expresses surprise, sensorimotor play (movement)	6 months
Plays Pat-a-cake, Peek-a-boo	9 months
Experiences distress when caregiver leaves, depends on parent, and engages in onlooker (watching others play) and parallel play (separately while others are playing)	12-15 months
Recognizes self in a mirror, engages in symbolic play with objects	15 to 18 months
Self centeredness, imitates others , may be aggressive	2 years
Engages in group play, develops sense of being male or female, takes turns, knows full name	3 years
Imitates adult roles, may have imaginary friends	4 years
Conforms to peers, symbolic play declines and social play begins	5 years



*If I had my child to
raise over again*

*If I had my child to raise over again,
I'd finger paint more, and point the finger less.*

I'd do less correcting, and more connecting.

*I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch
more with my eyes.*

*I would care to know less, and know to care
more.*

I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.

I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.

*I would run through more fields, and gaze at
more stars.*

I'd do more hugging, and less tugging.

*I would be firm less often, and affirm much
more.*

I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.

I'd teach less about the love of power,

And more about the power of love.

— Diane Loomans

Recommended Activities to enhance all round development

Nutrition

Breast milk or alternative formula is the baby's source of nutrients and energy for the first 4 to 6 months of life. Research shows that breast feeding is better for a baby's health than bottle feeding. World Health organization recommends exclusive breast feeding for 6 months of age, and afterwards continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age. Some of the benefits of breast feeding are:

- Appropriate weight gain and lowered risk of developing obesity
- Improved neurological and cognitive development
- Improved visual acuity
- Prevention or reduction of diarrhea, respiratory infections and bacterial infections

After weaning your child, getting enough of each nutrient (Protein, Carbohydrates, Vitamins, Minerals and Water) is vital for normal physical growth and development. A lack of proper nutrition can inhibit your child's physical growth and cognitive development. Further more, starting healthy eating habits early sets the stage for the rest of your child's life.



Recommended Activities to enhance all round development

Toilet Training

It is important that children are taught to control and eliminate waste at this stage of development. Such training must be carried out by parents or caregivers in a warm, relaxed and supportive manner. Children usually reach two years of age before they can recognize and respond to toileting signals such as a full bladder. Premature toilet training will only frustrate you and upset your child, because they can't do what you ask of them.

Keep using nappies until your child shows signs that they are ready to start toilet training, including:

Age – Between 18 months and three years

Interest –expresses curiosity in watching others go to the toilet.

Dryness – their nappy stays dry for up to two hours,

Disliking nappies

Awareness – your child can tell you they're pooing or weeing while they're doing it, or can tell you straight after. If they can tell you before it happens, they are definitely ready for toilet training.

Attention – they have the ability to sit in one position for two to five minutes.



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