

APPENDIX E – CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES



Child development describes how children/youth grow and change over time. Experts divide developmental stages into five periods from birth to 18 years old. These five stages are:

- Newborn – 0 through 2 months
- Infant – 3 months through 12 months
- Toddler – 1 year through 3 years
- Preschool – 3 years through 5 years
- School-Age – 6 years through 17 years

At each stage, healthcare providers expect children/youth to meet certain developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are the behaviors that mark stages of typical growth. It is important to remember that all children/youth develop at their own pace; however, most children/youth pass through specific changes at approximately the same time, as they get older.

Experts divide child growth and development into four areas:

- Physical Development ~ refers to strength and physical skills;
- Cognitive Development ~ involves thinking and problem-solving;
- Language Development ~ refers to communication and understanding; and
- Social-Emotional Development ~ affects how children interact with others and process feelings.

During the first year of life, the infant’s development is so dramatic that parents often feel the baby “changes overnight.” Physical development proceeds from head control to mobility. The primary psychosocial task for the baby is to build a sense of safety, security and trust in other human beings (parents/other caretakers). If this task is not accomplished, it will negatively impact emotional development. Identifying, and knowing, the causes of any delays can help provide appropriate supports.

Below are examples of developmental milestones and the ages they typically occur:

NEWBORN – 0 to 2 months:

- 2 Months
 - **Physical:** Holds head up when on tummy; moves both arms and both legs; opens hands briefly;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Watches you as you move; makes sounds other than crying; reacts to loud sounds; looks at a toy for several seconds;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Calms down when spoken to or picked up; looks at your face; seems happy to see you when you walk up to him/her; smiles when you talk to, or smile at, him/her.

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INFANT – 3 to 12 months:

- 4 Months
 - **Physical:** Holds head steady without support when you are holding him/her; holds a toy when you put in his/her hand; uses arm to swing at toys; brings hands to mouth; pushes up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Makes sounds look “oooo”, “aahh” (cooing); makes sounds back when you talk to him/her; turns head towards the sound of your voice; if hungry, opens mouth when sees breast and/or bottle; looks at his/her hands with interest;
 - **Social-Emotional:** smiles on his/her own to get your attention; chuckles when you try to make him/her laugh; looks at you, moves or makes sounds to get, or keep, your attention.
- 6 Months
 - **Physical:** Rolls from tummy to back; pushes up with straight arms when on tummy; leans on hands to support self when sitting;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Puts things in mouth to explore them; reaches to grab a toy; closes lips to show he/she doesn’t want more food; takes turns making sounds with you; blows “raspberries”; makes squealing noises;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Knows familiar people; likes to look at self in mirror; laughs.
- 9 Months
 - **Physical:** Gets to sitting position by self; moves things from one hand to the other hand; uses fingers to “rake” food towards self; sits without support;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Looks for objects when dropped out of sight (like spoon or toy); bangs two things together; makes lots of different sounds like “mamamama” and “bababababa”;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers; shows several facial expressions like happy, sad, angry, surprised; looks when you call his/her name; reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you or cries); smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo.
- 12 Months
 - **Physical:** Pulls up to stand; walks holding onto furniture; drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it; picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Puts something in a container, like a block in a cup; looks for things he/she sees you hide, like a toy under a blanket; waves “bye-bye”; calls a parent “mama” or “dada” or another special name; understands “no” (pauses briefly or stops when you say it);
 - **Social-Emotional:** Plays games with you, like “patty-cake”.

TODDLER – 1 to 3 years:

- 15 Months
 - **Physical:** Takes a few steps by self; uses fingers to feed self;

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- **Cognitive/Language:** Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book; stacks at least two small objects, like blocks; tries to say one or two words besides “mama” or “dada”, like “ba” for ball or “da” for dog; looks at a familiar object when you name it; follows directions given with both a gesture and words, example, gives you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, “Give me the toy”;
- **Social-Emotional:** Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does; shows you an object he/she likes; claps when excited; hugs stuffed doll or other toy; shows you affection (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you).
- 18 Months
 - **Physical:** Walks without holding on to anyone or anything; scribbles; drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes; feeds self with fingers; tries to use a spoon; climbs on and off a couch or chair without help;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom; plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car; tries to say three or more words besides “mama” or “dada”; follows one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you the toy when you say, “Give it to me.”.
 - **Social-Emotional:** Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by; points to show you something interesting; puts hands out for you to wash them; looks at a few pages in a book with you; helps you dress him/her by pushing arm through sleeve or lifting up foot.
- 24 Months
 - **Physical:** Kicks a ball; runs; walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help; eats with a spoon;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Holds something in one hand while using the other hand, for example, holding a container and taking the lid off; tries to use switches, knobs or buttons on a toy; plays with more than one toy at a time, like putting toy food on a toy plate; points to things in a book when you ask, “Where is the bear?”; says at least two words together, like “More milk”; points to at least two body parts when you ask him/her to show you; uses more gestures than just waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying; looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation.
- 30 Months
 - **Physical:** Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids; takes some clothes off by self, like loose pants or an open jacket; jumps off ground with both feet; turns book pages, one at a time, when you read to him/her;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Uses things to pretend, like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food; shows simple problem-solving skills, like standing on a

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small stool to reach something; follows two-step instructions like, “Put the toy down and close the door.”; knows at least one color, like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, “Which one is red?”; says about 50 words; says two or more words together, with one action word, like “Doggie run”; names things in a book when you point and ask, “What is this?”; says words like “I”, “me” or “we”;

- **Social-Emotional:** Plays next to other children and sometimes plays with them; shows you what he/she can do by saying, “Look at me!”; follows simple routines when told, like helping to pick up toys when you say, “It’s clean-up time.”
- 36 Months
 - **Physical:** Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni; puts on some clothes by self, like loose pants or a jacket; uses a fork;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Draws a circle, when you show him/her how; avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn him/her; talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges; asks “who”, “what”, “where”, or “why” questions, like “Where is mommy/daddy?”; says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running”, “eating”, or “playing”; says first name, when asked; talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave, like at a childcare drop off; notices other children and joins them to play.

During the toddler years, children tend to separate emotionally from parents or primary caretakers. Self-esteem and self-confidence develop as they make moves towards greater autonomy while securing their attachment to important adults. Key milestones include locomotion, toilet training and verbal communication.

PRESCHOOL – 3 to 5 years

- 3 Years
 - **Physical:** Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni; puts on some clothes by self, like loose pants or a jacket; uses a fork;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Draws a circle, when you show him/her how; avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn him/her; talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges; asks “who”, “what”, “where”, or “why” questions, like “Where is mommy/daddy?”; says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running”, “eating”, or “playing”; says first name, when asked; talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave, like at a childcare drop off; notices other children and joins them to play.

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- 4 Years
 - **Physical:** Catches a large ball most of the time; serves food or pours water, with adult supervision; unbuttons some buttons; holds crayon or pencil between fingers and thumb (not a fist)
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Names a few colors of items; tells what comes next in a well-known story; draws a person with three or more body parts; says sentences with four or more words; says some words from a song, story or nursery rhyme; talks about at least one thing that happened during the day, like “I played soccer”; answers simple questions, like “What is a coat for?” or “What is a crayon for?”
 - **Social-Emotional:** Pretends to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog); asks to go play with children if none are around, like “Can I play with Joey?”; comforts others who are hurt or sad, like hugging a crying friend; avoids danger, like not jumping from tall heights at the playground; likes to be a “helper”; changes behavior based on where he/she is (place of worship, library, playground).
- 5 Years
 - **Physical:** Buttons some buttons; hops on one foot;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Counts to 10; names some numbers between 1 and 5 when you point to them; uses words about time, like “yesterday”, “tomorrow”, “morning”, or “night”; pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities, for example, during story time or making arts and crafts (screen time does not count); writes some letters in his/her name; names some letters when you point to them; tells a story he/she heard or made up with at least two events, for example, a cat was stuck in a tree and a firefighter saved it; answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it to him/her; keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges; uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall);
 - **Social-Emotional:** Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children; sings, dances, or acts for you; does simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table after eating.

During pre-school years, a child attains proficiency in simple self-care within the home and begins to form important relationships with peers and adults in a day care or school setting. This is a period of continuing growth in individuation and independence. Identification and attachment to the family is strong. Loss of, or separation from, parent during this phase of development may have long-term impact on personal identity or the persistence of magical thinking.

During the elementary school years, they experience successful mastery of the world outside their own family unit. Children this age are involved in academic learning, social interactions with same-sex peers and developing motor skills. As they move into the

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latency years, there is a strong need for children to learn more about their early history and incorporate this knowledge in their growing sense of self-identify.

SCHOOL AGE – 6 to 18 years

- 6 Years
 - **Physical:** Constant motion, very active; balance and rhythm are good; ties own shoes; makes simple, recognizable drawings;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Uses picture dictionary; can explain objects and their use; practices skills in order to become better; prints first and last name; names coins and can state the value of a penny, nickel and a dime; can read age-appropriate books and/or materials; knows daytime and nighttime; can differentiate right and left hands;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Poor ability to regulate feelings; enjoys performing for others; difficulty making decisions; plays simple games; often insists on having own way; may return to thumb sucking, baby talk, etc.; understands time interval differences including seasons.
- 7 Years
 - **Physical:** Enjoys many activities and stays busy; likes to paint and draw; jumps rope; rides a bike; small muscles are well developed; eye-hand coordination is well developed; can copy complex shapes, such as a diamond;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Speaks fluently; uses slang and clichés; recites days of week and months of year; can discuss own feelings, in retrospect; often seems not to hear when absorbed in own activity; can organize and classify information; learns to tell time; can understand commands with three separate instructions; can repeat three numbers backwards; writing speed increases;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Independent in completion of routines; shows more independence from parents and family; learning to screen out distractions and focus on one task at a time; when angry, becomes quiet and sullen; better control of voice and temper; sets high expectations for self; frequently disappointed by own performance; anxious to please others; sensitive to praise and blame; concerned about right and wrong.
- 8 Years
 - **Physical:** Jumps, skips, and chases; draws and paints; dresses and grooms self completely; movement is rhythmical and somewhat graceful; frequent accidents due to misjudging abilities; holds pencil, toothbrush and tools less tensely; enjoys exercise of both large and small muscles;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Can count backwards; knows the date; understands concept of space; ease in expression and communication; likes humor in stories; omits words and reads out of order; interested in money; knows addition and subtraction combinations – some by heart; can write sentences; tries to write neatly;

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- **Social-Emotional:** Starts to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships; may be selfish and demanding of attention; may be cheerful; very curious about activity of others; learning to lose at games; begins to have sense of humor (original riddles and jokes); starts to think about the future; understands more about their place in the world; pays more attention to friendships and teamwork; wants to be liked and accepted by friends.
- 9 Years
 - **Physical:** Becomes interested in competitive sports; apt to overdo physical activities; sitting posture often awkward, slouches, head close to work, etc.; works purposefully to improve physical skills; draws and paints;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Reads more and enjoys reading; enjoys school; wants to operate at optimal level; can describe preferred methods of learning; understands fractions; enjoys keeping a journal and making lists; worries about doing well in school;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Appears emotionally more stable; capable of concentrating for several hours; likes to plan ahead; peer pressure gains importance; enjoys collecting things; makes decisions more easily.
- 10 Years
 - **Physical:** Likes to write, draw, sew and/or paint; girls and boys tend to be even in size and sexual maturity at 10th birthday; increased fidgeting more common in girls than boys; little awareness of fatigue; bathing is strongly refused; loves outdoor exercise/play (baseball, running, soccer);
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Can participate in discussion of social and world problems; writes stories; likes to write letters; reads well; enjoys using the telephone; wishes are mostly for material possessions, health and happiness for self and others and personal improvement; enjoys memorizing; interest span is short, needs frequent shift in activity; interest in movies and television diminishes;
 - **Social-Emotional:** It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex; experiencing more peer pressure; becoming more aware of their body as puberty approaches; body image and eating issues sometimes start around this age
- 11 – 13 Years
 - **Physical:** (Girls) Pubic hair coming in, pigmented and curly; auxiliary hair begins after pubic hair; height growth spurt; breast development continues; labia enlarged; increase in subcutaneous fat; menstruation begins; (Boys) Prepubescent physical development; beginning growth of testes, scrotum and penis; downy pubic hair; consistent height growth;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** Beginning to move from concrete toward abstract thinking; increased interest in ideas, values, social issues, music, clothes, hair, personal appearance (especially common for girls); although conflict

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with family increases, most express attitudes that place strong value on family and involved parents;

- **Social-Emotional:** Anxious about peer acceptance; concern with self-identity; girls – highly concerned with body image and physical changes; increased interest in peers and culture; changing friends is common; strong need for achievement and recognition of accomplishment although may be masked by feigned indifference.
- 13 - 15 Years
 - **Physical:** (Girls) Pubic hair fully developed; continued breast growth; menstruation well established; decelerating height growth; ovulation (fertility); moderate muscle growth and increase in motor skills; (Boys) Pubic hair pigmented, curled; penis, testes and scrotum continue to grow; height growth spurt; seminal emissions, but sterile; voice lowers as larynx enlarges; mustache hair;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** When intelligence is normal, abstract thought is fully developed (usually by age 15) and can be applied in more situations; anxiety, major distractions interfere with abstract thinking; continued interest in ideas, values and social issues;
 - **Social-Emotional:** Increased independence from family; girls are somewhat more comfortable with body image and changes; boys highly concerned with body and changes as puberty begins; relationships with opposite sex increase; same sex relationship continues to dominate; reliance on, and anxiety about, peer relationships continue; may experiment with drugs; concerned with achievement, experiences, feelings of accomplishment and receiving recognition; continued interest in appearance, music and other elements of peer culture.
- 15 – 18 Years
 - **Physical:** (Girls) Full development of breasts and auxiliary hair; decelerated height growth; Uterus develops fully between 18-21 and other physical maturation complete; (Boys) Facial and body hair; pubic and auxiliary hair denser; voice deepens; testes, penis and scrotum continue to grow; emissions of motile spermatozoa (fertility); graduated deceleration of height growth; muscle growth; from 18-21, full development of primary and secondary sex characteristics; muscle and hair development may continue;
 - **Cognitive/Language:** When intelligence is normal, abstract thinking is well established; able to recognize and apply to own current and future situations and to broader issues (e.g., social concerns and academic studies); from 18-21, ability for abstract thinking and for practical problem-solving skills is increasingly tested by the demands associated with emancipation and/or higher education;
 - **Social-Emotional:** As a major emancipation step becomes imminent, there may be marked increase in anxiety and avoidance behaviors; increasingly concerned and interested in movement towards independence; can

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maintain more stable relationship with peers and adults; body image reasonably well established especially among girls; more realistic and stable view of self and others, nature of problems and better at problem solving; from 18-21, partial or full emancipation is accomplished, although with difficulty; concerns about autonomy lessen and concerns about resources (money, car) increase; relationships with family tend to be somewhat less conflictual; existing conflicts tend to resolve around emancipation issues; attention still on peers and self-identity.

The tasks of adolescence are similar for both boys and girls although boys tend to lag behind girls by one to two years, especially in physical maturation. Asymmetrical development, e.g., cognitive development before physical growth, is common. The primary tasks are: exploring personal identity and roles; lessening dependence on family and renewed emphasis on separation and individuation; exploring relationships with peers; exploring sexuality; and exploring ways to feel competent, important and accomplished. Normal development often involves swings in mood and reliability, vacillation dependence and independence, self-absorption, impulsivity and control conflicts with adults.

The information included in this Appendix was gathered from multiple sources/websites, including:

- https://www.medicinenet.com/what_are_the_5_stages_of_child_development/article.htm
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/21559-child-development>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>
- https://choc.org/primary-care/ages-stages/6_to_12_years/#:~:text=Children%20between%20%20and%2012%20years%20old%20will
- <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/school-age/social-and-emotional-development/lesson-2#:~:text=Social-Emotional%20Development%20Milestones%20of%20School-Age%20Children%20%20to,Want%20to%20be%20liked%20and%20accepted%20by%20friends>

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