



Learn The Sign. Act Early. Campaign

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Department of State
Office for New Americans





Learn The Sign. Act Early. Campaign

In Partnership with the NY Acts and the NYS Office for New Americans (ONA) Ramirez June Initiative



Department of State
Office for New Americans



Presentation Objectives

- Learn about the CDC's *Learn the Signs. Act Early. Campaign*. Free resources for families to monitor and discuss their child's development
- Recognize many children with developmental delays and disabilities are not identified early.
- Improve awareness of systems for early identification of developmental delays and disabilities.
- Promote parent-engaged developmental monitoring/surveillance through a case discussion.
- Review developmental milestones of 3-year-old.
- Learn about referral process





Learn The Signs. Act Early.



CDC Learn The Signs. Act Early. Campaign

- The CDC's *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* (LTSAE) program was launched in 2004:
 - to improve early identification of children with ASD/DD,
 - to enable children and families to access the services and support they need.
- As part of this program, the Act Early state systems grants focused on the need to improve State capacity and strengthen State and community systems for early identification and coordination of services for children with developmental disabilities.
- To advance these efforts, in 2011, the Act Early Ambassador program established points of contact within participating States to disseminate LTSAE materials within systems and organizations that serve children and their families.



Learn The Signs. Act Early. Mission

- To improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism, by increasing parent-engaged developmental monitoring so children and their families can get the early services and support they need.



Learn The Signs. Act Early. Focus.

- ***The focus of LTSAE is to engage, educate, and empower parents and other caregivers to monitor milestones and discuss child's developmental progress between recommended screenings.***
- ***LTSAE complements screening by engaging those who care for young children in celebrating a child's developmental progress and discussing any concerns.***





Developmental Monitoring

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What is Developmental Monitoring?

- A series of activities in partnership with parents/caregivers of children birth to 5 to promote a healthy development through regular check-in conversations with parents using developmental checklists
- Ensure that all children who need support get access to developmental screenings and supports as soon as possible.



Benefits of Developmental Monitoring

- Opportunity for meaningful discussion.
- Supports parents to learn about developmental milestones.
- Engages parents in actively monitoring development.
- Encourages parents to play with their children.
- Helps us know if children are developing on track.
- Provides parents an opportunity to voice concerns about development and choose a course of action.
- Identifying developmental delays as early as possible.



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Developmental Monitoring: Limitations



- Milestone checklists are not validated screening tools.
- Milestone checklists cannot be used to diagnose any developmental disability.
- Diagnosing a child with a developmental disability often requires an in-depth evaluation by one or more specialists.



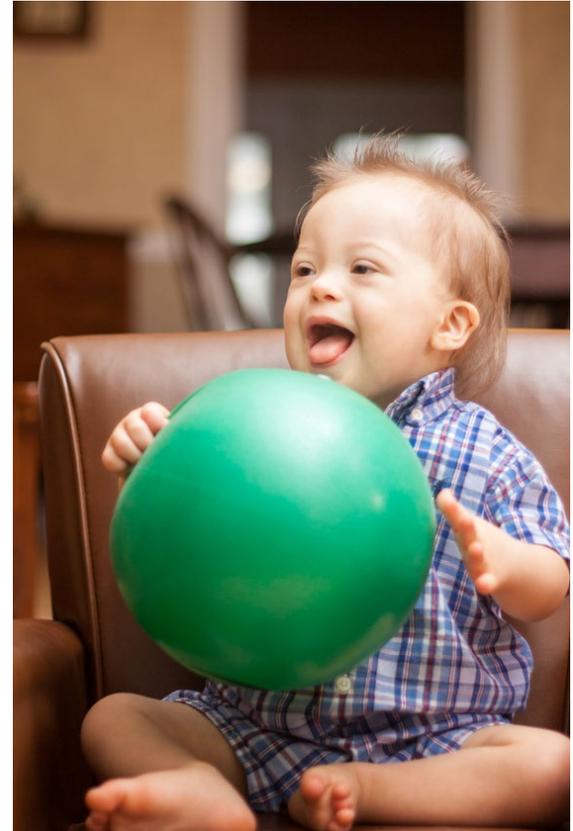
Why Monitor Development?

- Early childhood (ages 0–3) is a critical period that can set the stage for an individual’s health trajectory.
- Developmental disabilities are common and often not identified before school age
 - Up to **1 in 4** (≤ 5 yrs. of age) are at moderate to high risk for developmental, behavioral, or social-emotional delays¹
 - **1 in 6** (3–17 yrs. of age) has a developmental disability²
 - **1 in 31** (8 yr. olds) are estimated to have autism spectrum disorder³

1. *National Survey of Children’s Health, 2011-12*

2. *Zablotsky, B, et al, Pediatrics 2019*

3. *CDC, MMWR Surveillance Summary 1/2025*



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Why Early Identification is important....

- More than 80% of children with a developmental delay, don't receive the needed services until after the age of 3.
- Only about one-half of children with developmental problems are identified before school entrance.



Earlier Intervention is Better

- Evidence shows that starting supports as early as possible is best
- The earlier a child is identified, the sooner targeted intervention and family supports can start
 - It is never “too late” to start services and supports
- Intervention can improve skills, abilities, future school performance, long-term self-care skills, and quality of life
- Other benefits of early identification & intervention
 - Families understand their child’s strengths, and areas they may need support
 - Family wellness





LTSAE Resources

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CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Materials:

- All are available in English and Spanish to download
- Materials can be adapted, translated, and customized to help health professionals, early care and education providers, and other service providers work with parents to track the development of the children they serve.



Milestone Checklists

- Complete checklists address
 - Four domains of development
 - Activities to foster child's development
- How to use
 - Distribute to families at every home visit
- Can be printed in many languages

<https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/milestones/index.html>

important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your baby has reached by 9 months. Take this with you and talk with your baby's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your baby has reached and what to expect next.

What most babies do by the age of 9 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers
- Shows several facial expressions, such as happy, angry, and surprised
- Looks when you call her name
- Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches, or cries)
- Smiles or laughs when you play with her

Language/Communication Milestones

- Makes different sounds like "mama" or "babababa"
- Lifts arms up to be picked up

Other important things to ask your doctor

- What are some things you and your baby do together?
- What are some things your baby does on his or her own?
- Is there anything your baby does that you're worried about?
- Has your baby lost any skills he or she once had, or you have noticed?
- Does your baby have any special needs?

You know your baby best

- he or she once had, or you have noticed. Ask your doctor about developmental screening.
1. Ask for a referral to a specialist.
 2. Call your state or territory's early childhood program.

Help your baby learn and grow

As your baby's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your baby's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your baby's development.

- Repeat your baby's sounds and say simple words using those sounds. For example, if your baby says "bababa," repeat "bababa," then say "book."
- Place toys on the ground or on a play mat a little out of reach and encourage your baby to crawl, scoot, or roll to get them. Celebrate when she reaches them.
- Teach your baby to wave "bye-bye" or shake his head "no." For example, wave and say "bye-bye" when you are leaving. You can also teach simple baby sign language to help your baby tell you what he wants before he can use words.
- Play games, such as peek-a-boo. You can cover your head with a cloth and see if your baby pulls it off.
- Play with your baby by dumping blocks from a container and putting them back in together.
- Play games with your baby, such as my turn, your turn. Try this by passing a toy back and forth.
- "Read" to your baby. Reading can be talking about pictures. For example, while looking at books or magazines, name the pictures as you point to them.
- Limit screen time (TV, tablets, phones, etc.) to video calling with loved ones. Screen time is not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Babies learn by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Find out about choking risks and safe foods to feed your baby. Let him practice feeding himself with his fingers and using a cup with a small amount of water. Sit next to your baby and enjoy mealtime together. Expect spills. Learning is messy and fun!
- Ask for behaviors that you want. For example, instead of saying "don't stand," say "time to sit."
- Help your baby get used to foods with different tastes and textures. Foods can be smooth, mashed, or finely chopped. Your baby might not like every food on the first try. Give her a chance to try foods again and again.
- Say a quick and cheerful goodbye instead of sneaking away so your baby knows you are leaving, even if he cries. He will learn to calm himself and what to expect. Let him know when you return by saying "Daddy's back!"

To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

www.cdc.gov/ActEarly | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



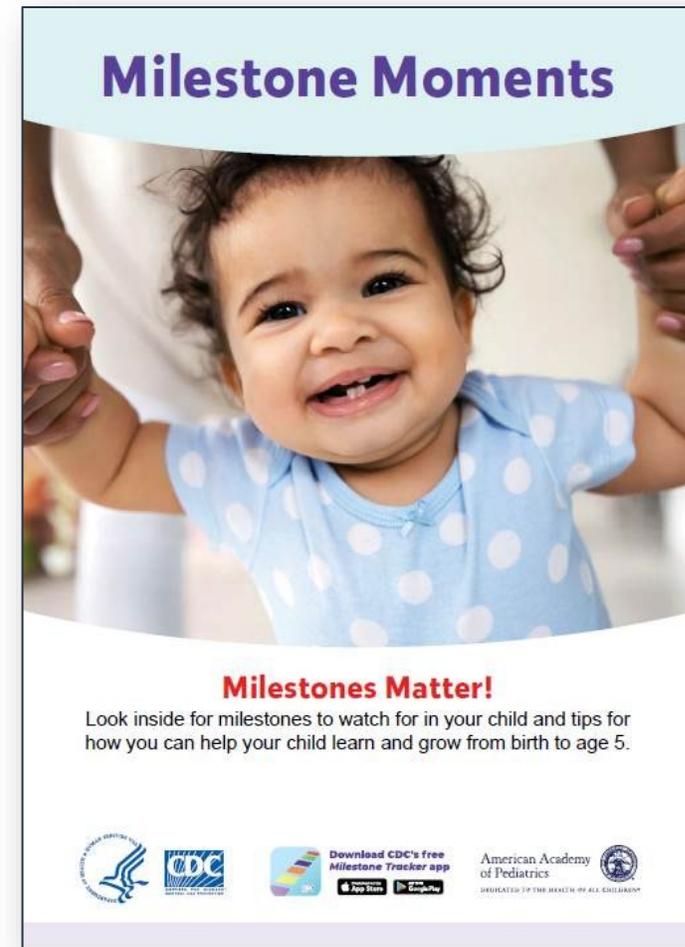
Learn the Signs. Act Early.



Milestone Moments Booklet

- Includes:
 - Complete milestone checklists (2mo – 5yrs)
 - Activities to try at home
 - Space to write down questions
- Intended for parent use throughout a child's early years
- Helps parents prepare for well-child visits; gives you a parent-friendly reference

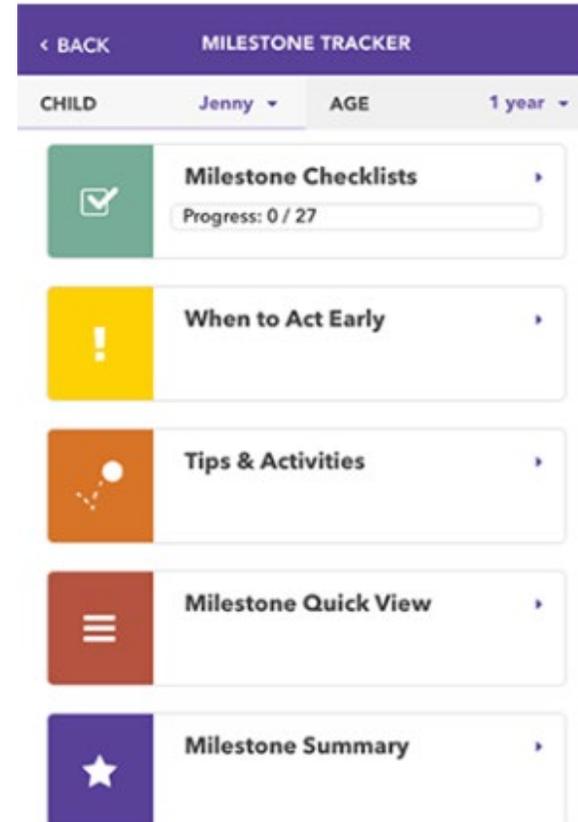
<https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/resources/milestone-moments-booklet.html>



Milestone Tracker App

- Available in English and Spanish for iOS and Android
- Can add multiple children
- Milestones tracker including photos and videos to help understand
- Tips and Activities
- Track appointments

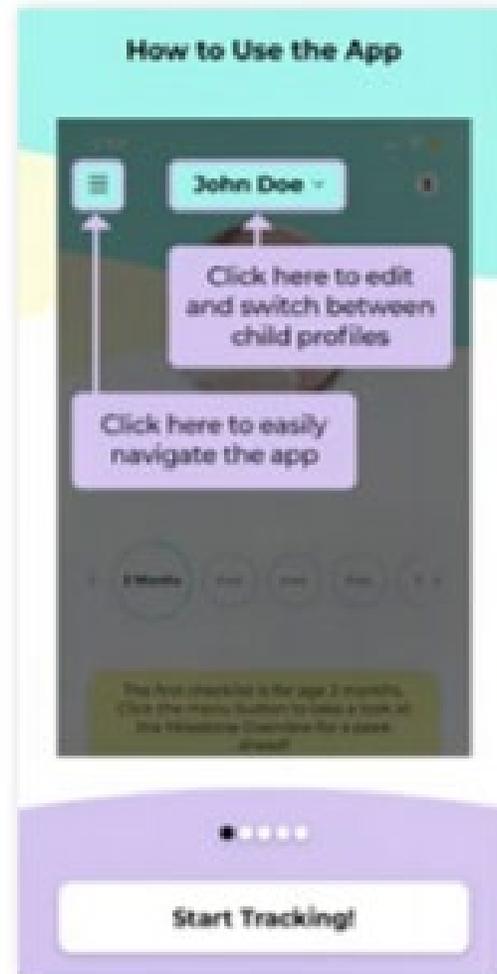
<https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/milestones-app/index.html>



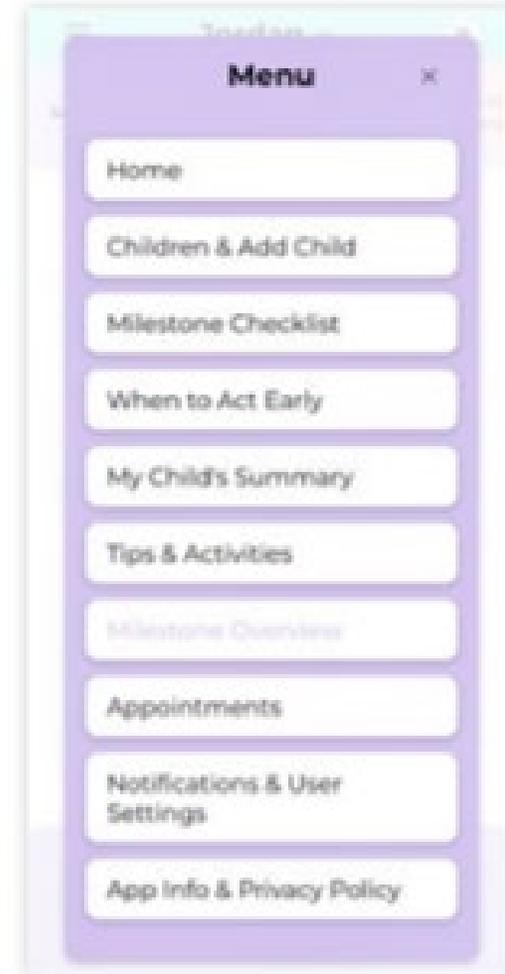
Welcome



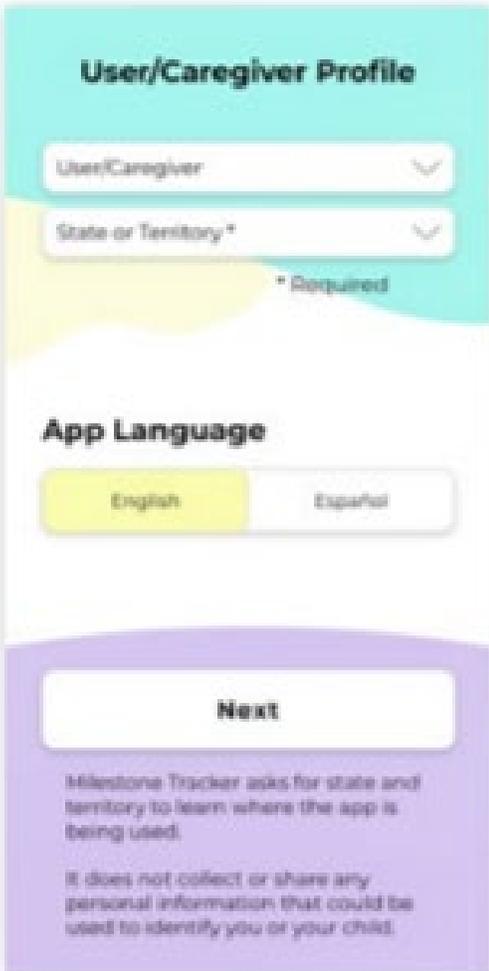
How To Use



Drop-down Menu



User Profile



User/Caregiver Profile

User/Caregiver

State or Territory*

* Required

App Language

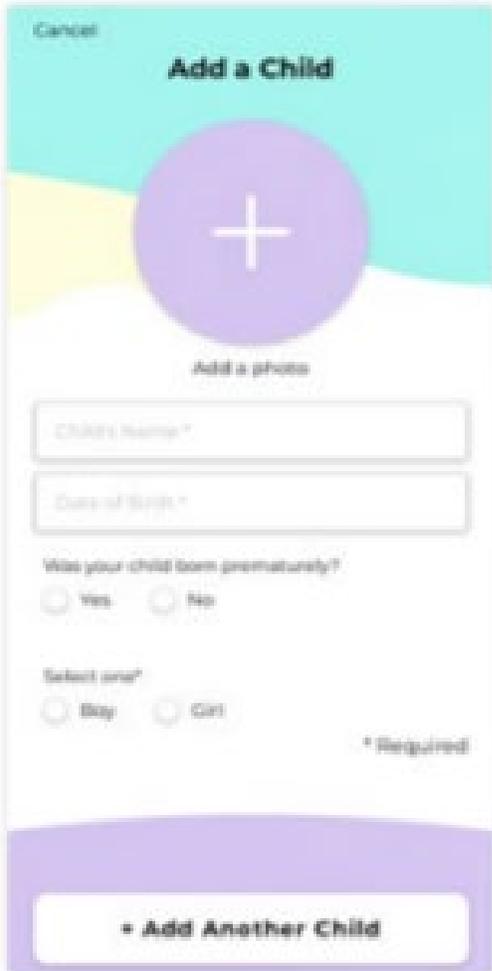
English Español

Next

Milestone Tracker asks for state and territory to learn where the app is being used.

It does not collect or share any personal information that could be used to identify you or your child.

Add a Child



Cancel

Add a Child

Child's Name*

Date of Birth*

Was your child born prematurely?

Yes No

Select one*

Boy Girl

* Required

+ Add Another Child

Checklist Intro

☰ Jordan ▾ ○

Social 7 to go Language 4 to go Cognitive 3 to go Movement 2 to go When to Act Early

4 Year Milestone Checklist

Milestone Tracker has checklists for ages 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 18 months and 2 to 5 years

If your child is between milestone checklist ages, complete the checklist for the younger age.

Start Tracking!

Milestone Checklist

☰ Jordan ▾ ○

Social 7 to go Language 4 to go Cognitive 3 to go Movement 2 to go When to Act Early

4 Month Milestone Checklist

Smiles spontaneously, especially at people



Yes Not Sure Not Yet

Notes will save automatically. Action items here.

Likes to play with people and might cry when playing stops

When to Act Early

☰ Jayden ▾

When to Act Early

If you select any of the items below, it's important to act early by talking with your child's doctor and asking for developmental screening. Don't wait. Acting early can make a real difference. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/Concerned

Because you selected "not yet" for a milestone checklist item and/or selected an item on this page, it may be time to talk with the doctor about your child's development.

Is missing milestones (automatically checked if you've selected "not yet" for any milestones)

Add a note

Doesn't crawl

Add a note

Can't stand when supported

Add a note

Tips and Activities

< Jayden ▾



Tips and Activities

You can help your child learn and grow. Talk, read, sing, and play together every day. Below are some activities to enjoy with your 1 year old child today.

All ▾

Encourage your child to help with simple chores at home, like sweeping and making dinner. Praise your child for being a good helper.

Favorite Remove Me

At this age, children still play next to (not with) each other and don't share well. For play dates, give the children lots of toys to play with. Watch the children closely and step in if they fight or argue.

Favorite Remove Me

Summary

☰ Jordan ▾

Not Sure

Plays "Mom" and "Dad"

Edit answer Edit note

Cooperates with other children

Edit answer Edit note

Not Yet

Flours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food

Edit answer Edit note

Yes

Enjoys doing new things

Edit answer Edit note

Is more and more creative with make-believe play

Edit answer Edit note

Would rather play with other



Developmental Milestones 3-year-old

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Developmental Milestones for a 3-Year-Old

Your child at 3 years

Child's Name _____ Child's Age _____ Today's Date _____

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your child has reached by age 3. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.



What most children do by this age:

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave her, like at a childcare drop off
- Notices other children and joins them to play

Language/Communication Milestones

- 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

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Draws a circle, when you show him how
- Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn her

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni
- Puts on some clothes by himself, like loose pants or a jacket
- Uses a fork

Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

You know your child best. Don't wait. If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your child's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

- Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
- Call any local public elementary school for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get services to help.

For more on how to help your child, visit cdc.gov/Concerned.

Don't wait.
Acting early can make
a real difference!



Help your child learn and grow

As your child's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your child's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your child's development.



- Encourage your child to solve her own problems with your support. Ask questions to help her understand the problem. Help her think of solutions, try one out, and try more if needed.
- Talk about your child's emotions and give him words to help him explain how he's feeling. Help your child manage stressful feelings by teaching him to take deep breaths, hug a favorite toy, or go to a quiet, safe place when he is upset.
- Set a few simple and clear rules that your child can follow, such as use gentle hands when playing. If he breaks a rule, show him what to do instead. Later, if your child follows the rule, recognize and congratulate him.
- Read with your child. Ask questions, such as "What is happening in the picture?" and/or "What do you think will happen next?" When she gives you an answer, ask for more details.
- Play counting games. Count body parts, stairs, and other things you use or see every day. Children this age are starting to learn about numbers and counting.
- Help your child develop his language skills by speaking to him in longer sentences than his, using real words. Repeat what he says, for example, "need nana," and then show how to use more "grown-up" words by saying, "I want a banana."
- Let your child help with making meals. Give him simple tasks, such as washing fruits and vegetables or stirring.
- Give your child instructions with 2 or 3 steps. For example, "Go to your room and get your shoes and coat."
- Limit screen time (TV, tablets, phones, etc.) to no more than 1 hour per day of a children's program with an adult present. Don't put any screens in your child's bedroom. Children learn by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Teach your child simple songs and rhymes, such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."
- Give your child an "activity box" with paper, crayons, and coloring books. Color and draw lines and shapes with your child.
- Encourage your child to play with other children. This helps him learn the value of friendship and how to get along with others.

To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

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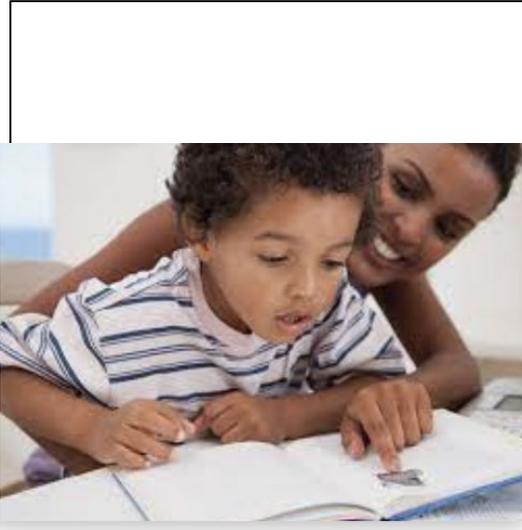
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Developmental Milestones: 3-year-old

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/checklists/Eng.-3-yrs-Milestone-Moments-Checklist-2021-P.pdf>



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If there is a concern...

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If the family is concerned

1. Make an appointment with your child's doctor.
2. Complete a milestone checklist
3. During the doctor's appointment:
 - Show the completed milestone checklist to the doctor.
 - Ask the doctor for a developmental screening for your child.
 - Ask the doctor if your child needs further developmental evaluation.
4. Make sure you understand what the doctor tells you and what to do next.



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Resource: How to Talk with the Doctor

Concerned about Development? How to Talk with the Doctor



A first step toward getting help for your child when you are concerned about his or her development (how your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves) is to talk with your child's doctor.

Here are some tips for talking with your child's doctor:

1 Prepare for your visit.

- When you make your next well child appointment, tell the doctor's staff you have concerns about your child's development that you want to discuss.
- Write down your questions, concerns, and some examples; take these to the appointment.
- Fill out a milestones checklist for your child's age from www.cdc.gov/Milestones and take it with you to share with the doctor.
- Have other adults who know your child well fill out a milestone checklist, too.
- If you can, take another adult with you to play with your child so you can better focus on what the doctor says.

2 Ask all of your questions during the visit; you know your child best and your concerns are important!

- Tell the doctor you have concerns at the start of the visit and share the milestones checklist and any questions you might have written down.
- If the doctor seems to be in a hurry, ask if you should schedule another visit.
- Ask about your child's most recent developmental screening results. If a screening has not been done, ask for one. For information about developmental screening, go to www.cdc.gov/DevScreening.
- Take notes to help you remember what the doctor says and what to do next.

3 Make sure you understand what the doctor says and what to do next.

- Before you leave, make sure all of your questions have been answered.
- If you do not understand something, ask the doctor to explain it again or in a different way.
- Review your notes and ask the doctor, nurse or office staff for any information you will need to do what the doctor has told you. For example, "What is the phone number for my local early intervention program?"
- When you get home, review your notes and call the doctor's office if you have any questions.
- Take the steps the doctor has told you and remember to follow up with the doctor about how it went.

You Know Your Child Best

Remember, acting early on concerns is the best way to help your child.

If your doctor has told you to "wait and see," but you feel uneasy about that advice:

Talk with another doctor to get a second opinion

— AND —

Call for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get free or low-cost services that can help.

You do not need a doctor's referral to have your child evaluated for services.

If your child is under age 3:
Call your state's early intervention program. Find the phone number at www.cdc.gov/FindEI.

If your child is age 3 or older:
Call any local public elementary school.

For more on how to help your child, visit www.cdc.gov/Concerned.

Don't wait.
Acting early can make a real difference!

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Two major sources of free public services Disclosures

Early Intervention:

- Children 0 – 36 months



Special Education (Through Public Schools):

- Children 36 months – 21 years old



Early Intervention



- Eligibility for early intervention services is based on an evaluation of the child's skills and abilities.
- A doctor's referral is not necessary.
- Early intervention focuses on helping eligible babies and toddlers learn the basic and brand-new skills that typically develop during the first three years of life.



Board of Education: Special Education

- 3 to 21 years old
- Every child has right to evaluation
 - Anyone can request evaluation, but parent must consent.
 - Evaluation must be conducted in child's primary language and in English.
 - NY requires evaluation started within 30 days of request.
 - Repeat evaluation every 3 years.



Questions?



ActEarly@cdc.gov





Thank You

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