PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Your Child's Development From 3 to 6 Months

This information lists the skills your child will likely learn between 3 and 6 months.

Movement and physical development

Between 3 and 6 months, they may learn to:

- Bring their hands to their knees and feet.
- Roll onto their side or back when they're lying on their stomach.
- Reach for toys when lying on their stomach.
- Turn over when lying on their stomach.
- Sit with or without support.
- Bear weight through their legs and bounce up and down when held in a standing position.

Social-emotional and self-help skills

Between 3 and 6 months, your child may learn to:

- Coo (makes a soft murmuring sound) when spoken to.
- Smile.
- Play with people. They may cry when playing stops.
- Begin to hold their bottle with both hands.
- Turn their head when eating from a spoon. This usually happens around 4 to 6 months.

Learning, thinking, and problem solving skills

Between 3 and 6 months, your child may:

- Start to play with rattles.
- Find objects that are partially hidden.
- Start to respond to their parent's voice.

Speech, language, and communication skills

Between 3 and 6 months, your child may:

- Laugh, squeal, and coo.
- Laugh when their eyes are covered (plays peek-a-boo).
- Move their eyes in the direction of sounds.
- Respond to changes in your tone of voice.
- Notice toys that make sounds.
- Pay attention to music.
- Coo and begin to babble when playing along with you (says bababa, mamama, dadada).

What you can do to help your child's development

Your child may not have a lot of energy during their treatment. But it's still important to help them move, communicate, and play as part of their daily routine. Here are some things you can do to help them:

- Massage their hands and feet.
- Make sure they spend time on their stomach when they're awake.
- Play with them while they're in a seated position.
- Get them to play with their hands together in front of their body.

- Have them reach for nearby toys.
- Encourage them to kick by placing rattles or toys near their feet.
- Have them play with toys that have sounds and lights.
- Talk to them by repeating sounds they have made.
- Read to them.
- Say simple words to them, such as “cat” or “dog.”
- Play peek-a-boo with them.
- Limit how much time they spend watching TV or looking at your phone.
- Narrate and sing songs while you do activities.
- Offer toys that can be placed in their mouth without the risk of choking (such as teething ring or rattle).

When to call your child’s healthcare provider

Call your child’s healthcare provider if your child:

- Cannot look straight ahead when lying on their back.
- Does not reach for toys.
- Does not like to change positions.
- Has stiff legs.
- Does not push down with their legs when their feet touch a hard surface.
- Does not roll over.
- Has trouble bringing things to their mouth.
- Does not coo or babble.
- Does not make eye contact or move their eyes in the direction of sounds.
- Is having trouble eating from a spoon or eating baby food.

Contact information

If you have questions about your child's development, talk with their healthcare provider. You can also ask for a referral to MSK's physical, occupational, or speech therapy.

You can reach MSK's Physical and Occupational Therapy department Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 212-639-5384. You can reach the Speech and Hearing Rehabilitation department Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 212-639-5856.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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