PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Your Child's Development From Birth to 3 Months

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

Movement and physical development

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

- Watch an object as it moves from side to side.
- Bring their hands to their mouth or stomach.
- Stretch and kick their legs.
- Hold their head and chest up when lying on their belly.
- Grab and hold a toy for a few seconds.

Social-emotional and self-help skills

Between birth and 3 months, your child may learn the following social and self-help skills:

- Welcomes physical contact and touching.
- Pays attention to faces.
- Makes eye contact.
- Makes noise when in pain.
- Naps often.
- Can suck, swallow, and breathe during feeding.

- Keeps eye contact during feeding.
- Can briefly calm themselves down.
- Tries to look at parent.

Learning, thinking, and problem solving skills

Between birth and 3 months, your child may:

- Respond to sounds and voices.
- Show interest in people.
- Show excitement.
- Watch a person's eyes and mouth when they speak.
- Get bored if an activity does not change. They may cry or act fussy.

Speech, language, and communication skills

Between birth and 3 months, your child may:

- Get startled at loud sounds.
- Recognize your voice.
- Smile, gurgle, or turn their head towards a sound.
- Have different sounding cries for different needs.
- Become quiet or smile when you talk.
- Coo (make a soft murmuring sound).
- Smile at people.

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:

- Look at your child's face and make eye contact during activities (such as playing or singing).
- Help your child play with their hands together (such as clapping).
- Make sure your child spends time on their stomach when they're awake.
- Massage your child's hands and feet.
- Have your child play with toys that have sounds and lights.
- Limit how much time your child spends watching TV or looking at your phone or tablet.
- Talk about what you're doing while you do activities.
- Sing songs.

When to call your child's healthcare provider

Call your child's healthcare provider if your child:

- Does not watch things as they move from side to side.
- Does not make eye contact.
- Does not respond to loud sounds.
- Does not like to change positions.
- Does not kick their legs.
- Keeps their hands in fists.
- Does not move their arms.
- Cannot lift their head when lying on their stomach.
- Does not want to eat.
- Coughs during feeding.
- Does not coo.

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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