



PATIENT EDUCATION

Early Childhood Developmental Milestones

MAYO CLINIC CHILDREN'S CENTER



BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS
PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mayo Clinic Children's Center

For more than 100 years, teams of physicians have cared for children at Mayo Clinic.

T. DENNY SANFORD PEDIATRIC CENTER MAYO EUGENIO LITTA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Pediatric Sub-Specialties in the following areas:

Allergy and Immunology	General Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Anesthesiology	Gynecology, Adolescent	Psychiatry and Psychology
Cardiology	Hematology and Oncology	Pulmonology
Cardiovascular Surgery	Infectious Diseases	Radiation Oncology
Child and Family Advocacy Program	Medical Genetics	Radiology
Community Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine	Neonatal Medicine	Regional (Health System) Pediatrics
Critical Care	Nephrology	Research
Dermatology	Neurology	Rheumatology
Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics	Neurosurgery	Sleep Medicine Center
Emergency Medicine	Ophthalmology	Speech Pathology
Endocrinology and Metabolism	Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery	Surgery
Gastroenterology and Hepatology	Orthopedic Surgery	Urology
	Otorhinolaryngology (ENT)	
	Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	

Pediatric Specialty Clinics:

Adrenoleukodystrophy Clinic	Dana Child Developmental and Learning Disorders Program	Metabolic Bone Clinic
Aerodigestive Clinic	Dermatology Genetics Clinic	Mood Disorders Clinic
Anxiety Disorders Clinic and Intensive Therapy Program	Diabetes Clinic	Neonatal Follow-Up Clinic
Arrhythmia and Device Placement Clinic	Eating Disorders Clinic	Neuromuscular Clinic
Asthma Center	Eosinophilic Esophagitis Clinic	Pain Clinic
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD) Clinic	Epilepsy Clinic	Pain Rehabilitation Center
Bariatric Surgery Clinic	Erythromelalgia Clinic	Pediatric Diagnostic Referral Clinic
Brain Injury Program	Facial Paralysis and Reanimation Clinic	Pediatric Level 1 Trauma Center
Brain Tumor Clinic	Feeding Program	Plagiocephaly Program
Cerebral Palsy Clinic	Fertility Preservation	Pulmonary Hypertension Program
Chemotherapy/Radiation Long-Term Effects Clinic	Fetal Surgery Program	Renal Stone Clinic
Child and Adolescent Intensive Mood Program (CAIMP)	Friedreich's Ataxia Clinic	Spina Bifida Clinic
Childhood Sarcoma Clinic	Functional Movement	Spinal Deformities Clinic
ComPASS (Palliative Care and Integrative Medicine)	Disorder Program	Sports Medicine Center
Congenital Heart Clinic	Heart Failure Clinic	Thyroid Nodule/Cancer Clinic
Constraint Induced Movement Therapy Program	Hemophilia/Coagulopathy Clinic	Transgender Clinic
Craniofacial Clinic	Hyperlipidemia Program	Transitions Program
Cystic Fibrosis Center	Immunodeficiency Disorders Clinic	Transplant Center
	Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic	Travel Clinic
	Learning Disorders	Vascular Malformations
	Assessment Clinic	Velo-Pharyngeal Insufficiency Clinic
	Long QT Syndrome Clinic	Voiding Clinic
	Marfan Syndrome Clinic	Weight Management Clinic

Developmental Milestones

Developmental milestones are skills that most children can do by a certain age. Developmental milestones include:

- **Gross motor skills**, such as sitting, crawling and walking.
- **Fine motor skills**, such as eating, stacking blocks or coloring.
- **Thinking skills**, such as learning, understanding and reasoning.
- **Language skills**, such as speaking, using body language to communicate and understanding what people say.
- **Social skills**, such as interacting with others, expressing feelings and responding to the feelings of others.

Children are unique and develop at their own pace.

The age when a child reaches each milestone can vary quite a bit.

You know your child best. Tell your child's health care provider if you have concerns about your child.

Use this information to know what to expect from your child and to understand some simple things you can do to help your child learn and grow.

Early childhood and screen time

The American Association of Pediatricians recommends parents prioritize creative, unplugged playtime for infants and toddlers.

For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen time other than video chatting.

Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programming. Watch with your child to help them understand what they are seeing.

For children aged 2 to 5 years, limit screen use to one hour a day of high-quality programs. Watch with your child to help them understand what they are seeing.

Your Baby at 2 Months

Most 2-month-old babies:

- Smile at people and pay attention to faces.
- Cry when hungry or uncomfortable.
- Enjoy being soothed and cuddled.
- Turn head to track and follow objects with their eyes.
- Raise head while lying on their tummy.
- Coo, gurgle and lift head for increasingly longer times.
- Show they are hearing by becoming quiet when hearing a familiar voice and startled when they hear loud sounds.

You can:

- Hold, cuddle and rock your baby.
- Talk, sing and read to your baby.
- Make eye contact as you feed, dress and bathe your baby.
- Give “tummy time” each day.
- Play simple games, such as “peek-a-boo.”
- Play music and use soft toys to play with your baby.

Colic

If your baby has been diagnosed with colic, it usually improves markedly by the time your baby is 3 to 5 months old

Caring for a baby who has colic can be exhausting and stressful. Try to stay positive; colic will end. Seek out a good listener and talk about your feelings.

It is OK to let your baby cry for short periods of time in a safe space, such as their crib, if you need a break. Also, arrange for someone else to care for your baby sometimes so that you can have a break.

Talk to your baby's health care provider if you have concerns that your baby's colic is not improving.

If you have taken care of your baby's basic needs and are still unable to console them for longer than two hours, call your baby's health care provider.



Your Baby at 4 Months

Most 4-month-olds:

- Move and reach for objects with their hands and put their hands together.
- Grasp a rattle or other soft toy.
- Hold head steady.
- Raise up using their arms during tummy time.
- Push down on legs when feet are on a hard surface.
- Recognize familiar people and things at a distance.
- Copy some movements, such as smiling or frowning.
- Cry in different ways if they are hungry or sad.
- Babble and coo.
- Respond to affection.

You can:

- Play with, hold, cuddle, and rock your baby.
- Talk, sing and read to your baby. These activities help encourage speech and language development.
- Copy your baby's sounds.
- Play music and use age-appropriate toys to play with your baby. At this age, babies enjoy toys that make noise when you shake them.
- Respond quickly when your baby cries. This builds trust. You cannot spoil a baby at this age.

Crying

Crying is one way your baby communicates or “talks” to you. **Crying is normal and not harmful.** Babies often cry more at 4 months than they did in the first few weeks of life. This is because they are awake more often. They have become more alert and more aware of their environment.

Babies cry for many reasons. You may recognize that your baby uses different cries. Your baby may have a hunger cry, a wet or dirty diaper cry, and a too hot or too cold cry. Other cries may signal when your baby is tired or over-stimulated, afraid, or sick. Or your baby may cry when it is time to be held.

Respond quickly to your baby’s crying. In doing so, you help build your baby’s trust in you. **You cannot spoil an infant at this age.**

Babies cry less when they discover other ways to communicate and learn to comfort themselves.

If you have taken care of basic needs but still are not able to console your baby for longer than two hours, call your baby’s health care provider.



Your Baby at 6 Months

Most 6-month-olds:

- Reach for objects and pass them from one hand to another.
- Bring things to their mouth.
- Roll over in both directions.
- Sit with support.
- Supports weight on legs and might bounce.
- Rock back and forth on hands and knees and may crawl.
- Show curiosity about things.
- Babble and turn their head toward voices.
- Respond to their name.
- Make sounds to show they are happy or sad.
- Play simple games, such as peekaboo and patty-cake.
- String vowels together when babbling ("ah," "eh," "oh")
- Make consonant sounds when babbling ("m," "b")
- Like to look in a mirror.
- Like to play with others, especially parents.

You can:

- Talk and sing to your baby every day.
- Read books to your baby every day.
- Play with, hold, cuddle and rock your baby.
- Point out new things to your baby and name them.
- Play on the floor with your baby every day.
- Play simple games. When your baby smiles, you smile. When your baby makes sounds, copy them.
- Let your baby watch you hide a small toy under a cup or cloth and then find it.
- Play music and give your baby age-appropriate toys to play with.
- Give your baby chances to safely explore.
- Put your baby on their back or tummy and put toys just out of reach to encourage rolling over.
- Have your baby eat with the family whenever possible.

Thumb sucking and pacifiers

Many babies suck their thumb or fingers or use a pacifier. This is common. These habits have a soothing, calming effect. They usually are not a concern at this age.

Do not let your baby use a pacifier in place of or to delay meals.



Your Baby at 9 Months

Most 9-month-olds:

- Use their thumb and index finger, called a pincer grasp, to pick up small objects.
- Move things smoothly from one hand to the other.
- Put things in their mouth.
- Have fun hitting two objects together.
- Get into a sitting position and sit without help.
- Copy some sounds.
- Make “m,” “d,” and “b” sounds and say “mama” and “dada.”
- Creep or crawl.
- Stand when supported and may pull up to stand.
- May be afraid of strangers.
- Have favorite toys.
- Understand “no.”
- Use fingers to point at things.
- Look for things they see you hide.
- Watch the path of things as they fall or are tossed in the air.

You can:

- Talk, sing, and read to your baby every day.
- Talk about the things your baby points at. For example, “Is that a banana?”
- Say what you think your baby is feeling. For example, “Are you hungry? Do you want a bottle?”
- Say what your baby is looking at. For example, “Is that a red ball?”
- Play simple games. For example, pass a toy back and forth saying, “my turn, your turn.”
- Give your baby room to move and safely explore.
- Put your baby near safe things to pull up on.
- Watch whether your baby seems to hear and see well.
- Watch whether your baby makes eye contact with you to show wants or needs.
- Check to see whether your baby’s eyes are straight when your baby looks at something.
- Have your baby eat with the family whenever possible.

Separation and stranger anxiety

Separation anxiety is common and normal for 9-month-olds. Many babies cry when their parents leave the room. Eventually, they learn that parents go away and come back. Parents should never sneak away. Rather, say a brief good-bye and assure your baby that you will be back.

Some babies this age experience stranger anxiety when they are around anyone with whom they are not familiar. Let your baby watch you talk with, and see that you are comfortable with, a person. Then you may suggest that your baby go to that person.

If your baby cries, do not force your baby to go to someone they do not know.



Your Baby at 12 Months

Most 12-month-olds:

- Pull up to stand and walk holding onto furniture. Some babies may walk alone.
- Stand alone.
- May take a few steps without holding on.
- Wave bye-bye and shake their head “no.”
- Know the words “mama” and “dada” and will call their parents by name. Some babies can say a few other words.
- Repeats sounds or actions to get attention.
- Try to say sounds you say.
- Are shy with strangers.
- Cry when parents leave.
- Understand much more than they can express.
- Follow simple commands, such as point to a body part when asked.
- Have favorite books and toys.
- Enjoy stacking objects and banging things together.
- Follow simple directions like “sit down.”
- Find hidden things easily.

You can:

- Let your baby know how special they are to you. Continue to pick up, hold and cuddle your baby.
- Help your baby show joy, anger, sadness, fear, and frustration. Talk about those feelings with your baby.
- Give your baby lots of hugs, kisses and praise for good behavior. Don’t yell or spank.
- Talk, sing and read to your baby every day.
- Sing action songs like “Wheels on the Bus” and help your baby do the actions with you.
- Point to things and ask your baby to name them. Name new things for your baby.
- Use simple sentences when talking to your baby.
- Let your baby explore safely and be active.
- Give your baby stacking toys and toys to push and pull.
- Give your baby paper and crayons and encourage coloring and drawing.
- Encourage your baby to play alone and with other children.
- Have your baby eat with the family whenever possible.

Behavior management

It is normal for babies to be curious and to test limits. You may wish to use behavior management to teach good behavior and to protect your baby from harm.

Behavior management means you teach your baby limits. You do this with loving care and guidance. Try the following suggestions.

- Respond right away when a situation occurs.
- Distract your baby away from the harmful situation. Reinforce behaviors that are positive and appropriate.
- Say “no” firmly and remove your baby from the unsafe activity. Be careful not to say “no” too much. The word may lose its impact. Reserve your use of “no” for behaviors that are not safe. Safety-proof your home so it is a safe place for your baby to be.
- Tell your baby what you want them to do instead of what they should not do.
- Use one- or two-word explanations to help your baby learn not to do something. For example, use “Tastes yucky” or “That’s hot.”
- Be consistent in your approach.



Your Child at 18 Months

Most 18-month-olds:

- Walk and run on their own.
- Climb on things.
- Drink from a cup and eat with a spoon.
- Can get undressed.
- String different sounds together and say several simple words beyond mama and dada.
- Show affection to people they know.
- Say and shake head “no.”
- Play simple pretend, such as feeding a doll or stuffed animal.
- Have temper tantrums.
- Point to body parts when asked.
- Point to familiar objects when asked.
- Point to what they want.
- Follow simple commands, such as “sit down.”

You can:

- Offer praise and smile when your child learns new things.
- Read books and talk about the pictures using simple words.
- Point to clothing, toys, body parts, objects, or pictures and ask your toddler to name them.
- Use simple sentences to describe to your child what you are doing.
- Make a picture book with photos of your child, family members, pets, and objects familiar to your child.
- Encourage pretend play and play with your child.
- Encourage empathy. For example, if your child notices another child is sad, encourage a positive interaction with that child.
- Use words to describe feelings and emotions.
- Encourage active play in safe areas.
- Set up simple rules and limits your child needs to stay safe and keep others safe.
- Respond to your child in a calm and consistent way when rules or limits are not followed.
- Praise behaviors that are positive and appropriate. This is a more effective teaching tool than punishing negative behavior.
- Do not allow your child to hit, bite or be aggressive. If these rules are broken, stop the behavior. Then remove your child from the problem situation. Let your child calm down until quiet.
- Help your child express feelings in positive ways.

Temper tantrums

Almost all children between one and three years old have temper tantrums. This happens partly because they cannot verbally express their needs. When children this age become tired, hungry, frustrated, or frightened, it is harder for them to control their temper.

If you try to reason with or punish your toddler, you may lengthen the tantrum. It is better to make sure your child is in a safe place. Then ignore the tantrum. Don't directly look at your child. Don't speak to your child or about your child to others where your child can hear you.

The following may help prevent temper tantrums:

- Keep a daily routine. Routines and structure help children understand what to expect.
- Help your child meet physical needs. Provide healthy meals and snacks, plenty of rest, and time for play and activity.
- Set reasonable limits for your child. A child should not be expected to sit quietly and behave well for long periods.
- Set a good example for your child. Do not argue or yell in front of your child.



Your 2-Year-Old

Most 2-year-olds:

- Run and walk up and down stairs using two feet on each step.
- Throw a ball overhead.
- Use a fork and spoon.
- Open a door.
- Stack blocks and draw a vertical line.
- Like to imitate adults.
- Like to play alongside other children.
- Follow simple commands.
- Speak in two-word phrases.
- Say “no” or refuse to do what you have asked.

You can:

- Praise and smile when your child learns new things. Children enjoy positive feedback. They like to know you are pleased when they are learning.
- Establish simple rules and limits that keep your child and others safe.
- Respond to your child in a calm, consistent way when rules or limits are not followed.
- Be gentle but firm.
- Do not allow your child to hit, bite, or be aggressive. If these rules are broken, stop the behavior. Remove your child from the problem situation. Let your child calm down until quiet.
- Distract your child from harmful situations. Substitute other safe playthings or activities.
- Praise behaviors that are positive and appropriate.
- Encourage your child to be independent. Offer choices to your child whenever possible. Say, for example: “Do you want bananas or peaches?”
- Engage your child’s natural curiosity. Provide safe ways for your child to explore and discover.
- Encourage your toddler to play alone and to interact with others. Toddlers may be able to play with others for a brief time. Simple activities such as rolling a ball back and forth are fun for toddlers.
- Help your child use crayons or finger paints.
- Stuffed animals, toys for pounding, pots, pans, measuring cups, empty boxes, and soft balls will delight your child.
- Make an obstacle course with boxes or furniture for your child to climb in, on, over, under, and through.
- Put squeezing objects in the bathtub such as sponges or squeeze bottles.
- Toys such as cups and bowls that a child can use to dump and pour are also fun in the bathtub and sandbox.
- Play clean-up games. Have your toddler put toys on shelves or in boxes.

Toilet readiness

At around two years, children begin to show signs of being ready to use the toilet. Most children are interested in the toilet or potty-chair by the time they are 18 months to 2 years old. But they may not be ready for toilet training. Most children reach their peak readiness by about two and a half to three years.

Because children are unique, being ready to use the toilet is a very individual matter. A sign that your child prefers to be dry is when your child tells you about wet or soiled diapers. Praise your child for telling you.

Toddlers are naturally curious about how people use the bathroom. If your child seems curious, allow your child to watch you using the toilet. Place a potty-chair in the room where your child usually plays. Talk about how to use it. But do not insist that your child use it. It is often easier to wait for your child to ask to use the potty-chair.

When your child does use the toilet, tell your child how proud you are.



Your 3-Year-Old

Most 3-year-olds:

- Climb and run easily.
- Pedal a 3-wheel bike.
- Walk up and down stairs with one foot on each step.
- Show affection without prompting.
- Show concern if someone is sad.
- Take turns while playing.
- Understand “mine” and “yours.”
- May get upset with changes in routine.
- Dress and undress without help.
- Follow instructions that have two or three steps.
- Can name most familiar things.
- Can carry on a conversation using simple sentences.
- Talk well enough for strangers to understand them most of the time.
- Play make-believe with toys and people.
- Turn books one page at a time.

You can:

- Read to your child every day.
- Use simple sentences to describe what you are doing.
- Repeat yourself. Your child’s vocabulary increases by hearing familiar sounds and words repeated.
- Introduce new words or names to your child in a familiar setting.
- Encourage your child to play alone and in groups alongside or with other children.
- Work with your child to solve problems when they arise.
- Establish routines.
- Encourage self-care, such as helping with dressing.
- Explore the natural world: gather leaves, rocks and sticks.
- Go for a walk together.
- Visit a playground or park.
- Help your child use crayons, finger paints, and Play-Doh™.
- Encourage imaginative play and sharing toys. But do not be surprised if your child does not want to share toys with others.
- Offer stuffed animals and toys for building.
- Tell stories.
- Be a good role model for your child.

Behavior management

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that spanking a child is not an effective method of discipline. Spanking may help your frustration for the moment and may stop the unwanted behavior for a brief time. However, the behavior change may not last long.

Other effective means of discipline include:

- **Time-out.** You may, on occasion, need to separate your child from an activity when a behavior is not acceptable. The amount of time for a young child to remain in "time-out" is about one minute for each year of age. This means about three minutes for a 3-year-old. When the time-out is complete, talk to your child about what happened to cause the time-out.
- **Logical consequences.** Consequences for a child's behavior should relate to the behavior itself. For example, if a child throws a cup on the floor during mealtime, allow it to remain on the floor. Don't pick it up only to have it thrown on the floor again.
- **Loss of privileges.** You can take away toys that are not used correctly. You can turn off the TV if siblings begin to quarrel while they watch. These are examples of losing a privilege.
- **Ignoring behavior.** With a small child, the most effective action may be to ignore the unwanted behavior. Do this only if ignoring it does not put your child or others in danger. Ignore any unwanted behavior, but be sure to direct your child to appropriate behavior.



Your 4-Year-Old

Most 4-year-olds:

- Can hop and stand on one foot for a few seconds.
- Catch a bounced ball most of the time.
- Can pour and cut food with supervision.
- Enjoy doing new things.
- Enjoy creative make-believe.
- Like to play with other children
- Take turns, share and follow simple rules most of the time.
- Say what they like and dislike.
- Sing songs from memory.
- Tell stories.
- Can say their age and first and last name.
- Can name colors.
- Can count to 10.
- Start to understand time.
- Can draw a person with a few body parts.
- Can use safety scissors.
- Like to play board or card games.

Set a good example

Your child learns by watching you, even when you do not realize it. Your child will copy your behaviors. Therefore, be a good example for your child:

- Get regular activity and exercise.
- Select and eat healthy foods.
- Respond calmly when faced with challenging situations.
- Do not smoke.
- Wear a seat belt.
- Wear a helmet when you bike.

You can:

- Read and sing to your child and with your child each day.
- Encourage your child to describe objects and to tell stories about their experiences.
- Present numbers, letters, and new words to your child.
- Present new ideas to your child along with ideas your child already understands.
- Use simple sentences to describe what you are doing.
- Do not interrupt your child or finish your child's sentences.
- Praise your child for positive behaviors such as trying a new task, helping someone, or being cooperative.
- Help your child to express emotions in a positive way.
- Encourage your child's independence. Encourage your child to try new things and to do things on their own.
- Provide meaningful ways your child can contribute to the family and take part in family activities.
- Set up routines, rituals and family traditions.
- Enjoy and appreciate being in the company of your child.



Your 5-Year-Old

Most 5-year-olds:

- Stand on one foot for 10 or more seconds.
- Hop and may be able to skip.
- Can do a summersault.
- Use a fork and spoon and sometimes a table knife.
- Use the toilet on their own.
- Want to be like their friends.
- Follow rules.
- Like to play games, sing, act, and dance.
- Are aware of gender and may be curious about body parts and where babies come from.
- Can tell what's real from make-believe.
- Show independence and test boundaries.
- Can be demanding at times and cooperative at others.
- Speak clearly.
- Can say their name and address.
- Understand how money works.
- Can count to 10 or more.
- Can print some letters and numbers.
- Can draw simple shapes like a triangle and a square.

You can:

- Play with your child and encourage your child's interests.
- Take your child to the library, the park or go on a bike ride.
- Arrange playdates with children your child likes.
- Teach your child your address and phone number.
- Talk about everyday concepts like time and money. Start teaching the days of the week.
- Be creative with your child. Paint, draw and do crafts.
- Answer questions about body parts and where babies come from honestly and simply. Use correct terms for body parts. This gives your child the language to ask questions and express concerns.
- Teach your child that some body parts are private. Private parts of the body are those parts that a bathing suit covers. Let your child know that no one should touch or look at private body parts unless it is to provide care.

Testing rules is normal

Follow these guidelines as you set limits for your preschooler.

- Establish a few simple rules. Give the highest priority to safety, such as not running into the street and preventing harm to others. Do not allow your child to hit, bite or be aggressive.
- Use rules that are fair and reasonable. Do not punish your child for behavior that is part of normal emotional development.
- Respond consistently when rules or limits are not followed.
- Be gentle but firm. Use a pleasant tone of voice. Correct your child in a kind manner. Briefly state the rule that was broken.
- Praise behavior that is positive and appropriate. Give your child more praise and positive responses than negative responses.
- Encourage your child to be independent. Offer acceptable choices whenever possible. Say, for example, "Do you want orange juice or apple juice?"
- Young children quickly forget what they did that resulted in consequences. Therefore, give consequences right after the unacceptable behavior.



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BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal Mayo Clinic patient of more than 40 years and a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching. Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.

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