



Help Me Grow!

A guide to **fun brain-growth activities** for babies from birth to 2 years old!

INCLUDES EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES FOR BIRTH TO 2-YEARS OLD.



What are “developmental milestones”?

Developmental milestones are ways that early childhood experts can measure how a baby or child is developing from birth through about five years old. The milestones they watch for are skills or things that young children can typically do by a certain age.

Did you know that a baby's development starts even before birth? That's why it's important to understand how the brain develops and learns from the womb through early childhood. From the moment babies are born, they begin learning. Within months they have learned how to get their parents' attention, smile, wave, crawl and eventually how to speak!



Even though every child is unique and learns new skills differently and at their own pace, child experts have found that there are certain skills most children learn around the same age. If a child doesn't seem to be learning skills around the time others usually do, it could mean that the child has a developmental delay and needs extra help with learning certain skills.

What areas do developmental milestones include?

There are four categories, called “domains”, used to measure how children are learning new skills. Each domain has examples of skills most children are reaching by certain ages, like 2 months old, 9 months old, 2 years old, etc.



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL domain looks at how babies and young children react and interact with those around them. Examples would be if a baby cries when mom or dad leaves the room, how a child shares with other kids, and how they respond to others.



LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION domain looks at how babies and children learn to communicate. How are they showing others that they need something, are they learning the names of colors or shapes, and do they follow directions?



COGNITIVE (learning and thinking) domain looks at the ways children are learning new things and problem solving. For younger children, it may include watching how they explore objects (feeling, tasting, dropping items, or looking around), and for older children it may be skills like counting and learning the alphabet.



MOVEMENT/PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT domain looks at the ways children move their bodies, like when babies start to crawl or walk, passing or catching items (balls or toys) from others, and eating with forks and spoons.

It's also important to know that some milestones can help measure development in more than one category (domain.)



Why are developmental milestones important?

While every child is unique and may reach certain milestones at different times, watching for if or when they reach them helps us to better understand if they are developing or behaving appropriately for their age. If a child reaches milestones much earlier than most other children their age, they may be considered “advanced” for their age. If they are significantly behind where most other children are at their age, the child might have a developmental delay that needs extra support or special services to help them develop those skills.



How To Use This Guide

This guide includes information from [Child and Family Resource Network](#) family support specialists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The guide is intended to help explain why developmental milestones are important and provide some examples of skills children in various age groups can typically do. There are many more examples of milestones for each age; this guide only includes a few examples for each age listed.

As mentioned, every child will learn at their own pace. If you are worried your child isn't showing the ability to demonstrate the skills listed for their age group yet—don't panic. There are many more ways to measure development at each age group, and the ones we've included are just examples. [Call us](#) any time, and we will connect you with a family support specialist who can observe your child and recommend next steps. That's why we're here!



Prenatal Development

If you're pregnant, congratulations! If you're planning to become pregnant, now is a good time to learn how a fetus (baby before its born) grows and develops throughout pregnancy.

Even before a baby is born, its brain is developing just as its arms, legs and body are developing in the womb. There are a lot of things that can influence how a baby's brain grows throughout pregnancy, like a mom's nutrition, the environment and quality of air mom is breathing, infections and much more.



How You Can Help Your Baby's Brain Develop Before Birth

While there is a lot you can't control about how your baby grows throughout pregnancy, there are some things you can do to help lower the risks of health and development problems your baby could face during pregnancy or after.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are [steps](#) you can take to help with a healthier pregnancy. Click on the links for more information from CDC about each, or visit: www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/during.html.



» **TAKE FOLIC ACID:** Folic acid can help prevent some serious birth defects. It is recommended that pregnant women take a vitamin with 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day during pregnancy. If you are planning to become pregnant, or if you think it could become a possibility, you can start taking folic acid vitamins before you even become pregnant.

» **DON'T SMOKE:** If you are a smoker, take steps to quit before you become pregnant. If you become pregnant and are a smoker, quit as soon as possible. Quitting will help your baby get a better start at life. Smoking has been shown to make becoming pregnant more difficult, and in pregnant women increases the risks of miscarriage or preterm birth (before 37 weeks). Smoking can also cause tissue damage in the lungs and brain of a fetus. The CDC also reports one in five babies born to mothers who smoke during pregnancy has low birth weight.

» **DON'T DRINK ALCOHOL:** No amount of alcohol should be consumed any time during pregnancy. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy has been known to cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) in babies and children, which can result in many physical and mental challenges for a baby and child.

» **GET VACCINATIONS:** Making sure mom is vaccinated actually helps guard your fetus from many diseases. When mom is immune during pregnancy (has her vaccination) to a contagious disease, the baby gets their immunity from mom! During every pregnancy, mom should get a flu shot and whooping cough vaccine (Tdap). Be sure to talk to your doctor about what vaccines you've already had and which ones your doctor recommends you get now.

» **CHECK WHICH MEDICATIONS ARE SAFE:** Some medications can be harmful to growing babies during pregnancy. If you take any medications, ask your doctor which can be taken during pregnancy. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicine and dietary or herbal supplements.



Tip

It is important to see your doctor throughout pregnancy so they can monitor your health as well as the baby's growth!



Other Things to Consider During Pregnancy

We know that pregnancy is exciting and can be stressful! It is normal to feel both—and more. At the Child and Family Resource Network, we want to help you build confidence and feel prepared for providing a healthy, happy future for your baby.



➤ Website: childandfamilyresourcenetwork.org
Call or text: (712) 355-2615

Developmental Milestones

AGES 2 MONTHS TO 2 YEARS

These are just a few examples* of many developmental milestones you can watch for in your child at different ages. In the following pages, we also share activities you can do with your child to help them with development. Have fun, and enjoy watching your child grow!

2 Months:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks at your face Reacts to loud sounds Smiles when you talk to or smile at them Holds head up when on their tummy
6 Months:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows familiar people Takes turns making sounds with you Reaches to grab a toy they want Rolls from tummy to back
12 Months:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays games with you, like Pat-a-Cake Calls a parent "mama" or "dada" Puts something in a container, like a block in a cup Pulls up to stand

18 Months:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom Tries to use a spoon Points to show you something interesting Tries to say three or more words besides "mama" or "dada"
2 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy Kicks a ball Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation Says at least two words together, like "More milk"

*Remember, there are many more examples of developmental milestones for each age. For a complete checklist for your child's age, visit www.cdc.gov/Milestones or download CDC's free Milestones Tracker app.



Developmental Milestone Activities by Age— Birth to 2 Years Old

It is fun to watch your child grow, but it is even more rewarding to know there are free and easy activities you can do with your child to help them grow and develop!

Here are examples of simple activities all family members can do with your child to encourage age-appropriate development. If you have any concerns that your child isn't able to participate in activities listed for their age group, don't panic. Remember that babies and children grow at their own pace, but we also encourage you to call us or talk to your doctor if you're worried. [Child and Family Resource Network](#) will connect you to a free family support specialist who can meet with you and your child to complete a full assessment. If there are concerns that your child is experiencing delays, we can help you get the support needed.



Activities for Birth to 2 Months

- One of the best things you can do with your baby from birth is just spending time with them! Responding when they cry, smiling at them, holding them and singing to them are simple and loving activities that not only show you care, but also help their brain continue developing.

Other things you can do:

- **READ TO YOUR BABY.** It may seem silly—they don't really know what you're saying or what they're seeing yet, but reading to them as babies still helps with language development and recognizing objects.
- **RESPOND TO YOUR BABY BY SMILING,** acting excited and making sounds with them. This helps teach them about "conversations" and communicating back and forth.
- **TUMMY TIME WITH TOYS NEARBY CAN HELP THEM LEARN TO LIFT THEIR HEAD UP TO SEE THE TOYS BETTER.** Be sure not to leave the baby alone on their tummy—if they seem tired, turn them back over onto their back so they don't fall asleep face down.

Activities for 2-4 Months

- Most babies are starting to reach out for things and kick at toys. Making sure you have toys that are safe for this age, set your baby near you with some of their toys within reach. Or lay baby on their back under toys that they can kick.
- Read to your baby or talk to them about things you see on walks to help them connect words with objects. This helps build language skills.
- Give your baby safe objects or toys that are easy to hold, like a small spoon or a rattle.
- Lay your baby on their back and move a bright toy above them slowly—up and down, left to right—and see if they follow the toy with their eyes. Don't worry if they lose interest quickly, that's normal.



Tip

When babies start to move more on their own, including rolling over, scooting, crawling, or walking, be sure to check the areas nearby for things baby could choke on. We often drop small items without noticing, but babies moving around on the floor can easily find things and often put new items in their mouths to explore them. Always look around for small items and remove them.



Activities for 4-6 Months

- Reading to your baby is always a great activity! Even if books have no words, just pictures, describe the pictures and respond to baby's sounds. "Oh, isn't that red flower pretty?"
- Sing and play music for your baby (remember to keep the volume to a safe level.) Music and singing helps with brain development.
- Limit baby's time in front of TVs, iPads and video calls. Screen time is not recommended for children under 2 years of age. The best way babies learn is by talking and playing with people around them.
- Set your baby down on their tummy and put toys just out of reach (not far). Encourage them to roll over to reach the toys.



Activities for 12 Months

- As baby starts to move more on their own, you'll find yourself correcting them a lot more by saying "No, no, don't go in there!" or "No, be gentle with the kitty!" Don't yell, but be firm when they are doing something dangerous. Then show them where you do want them to go or show them how to do things the right way (pet the cat gently.)
- Point to interesting or fun things you see when you are on walks or going on errands. "See the red Fire Truck?" or "Look at the pretty bird!" Baby will learn to look where you point while also hearing the names of objects/things. When baby points at things, encourage them by saying the name of what they're pointing to, "Oh, you found a green car!"
- Give baby pots or pans and wooden spoons to make some "music"! Do this at a time when your home can get noisy and encourage them to make different sounds with different pans.



Tip

As baby's start to climb, be sure all stairways are blocked so that baby can't accidentally climb up or fall down the stairs.

Activities for 6-9 Months

- This is around the time when your baby will learn to wave "bye-bye" and make other moves to communicate, like nodding "yes" or shaking their head "no." Some parents choose to teach their babies simple sign language to help them communicate before they're able to say words.
- "Peek-a-Boo" is an easy and popular game to play with babies at this age. Cover your head with a small cloth then pull it off, saying "Peek-a-boo!" Help baby do the same if they are interested.
- Place toys a little further out of reach and encourage baby to scoot or crawl to get them. Show excitement if they reach the toy, but don't be discouraged (or show disappointment) if they don't. It takes practice!
- Repeat new sounds they make, like "gagaga" or "baba" back to them. If they are using these words for items, like water or a bottle, repeat the sound they made and then the real word—say "baba", and then point to the bottle and say "bottle".



Tip

Babies on the move like to explore! Make sure you have electrical sockets (wall plugs) covered/child-proofed so baby can't stick fingers or other objects in them. Also make sure shelves can't be pulled over by baby, and that heavy objects on shelves and tables are out of baby's reach.



Activities for 15 Months

- Most children's first words are not the complete word. They may say "wawa" for water or "ba" for ball. Encourage them by saying "Yes! That's a ball!"
- Let your child help you with some easy activities, such as asking them to bring you a dish towel that fell on the floor or bringing their shoes to you before leaving the house.
- When your child shows emotion (cries, laughs, gets mad) help them to name what they're feeling. If they are sad, show them your sad face and say, "I can tell you feel sad because you hurt your knee. I'm sorry." Or if they're mad, "I know you're frustrated and mad that we can't go outside because it's raining, but screaming is not ok. Let's find something else we can do that's fun inside."
- Help your child to try drinking out of a cup without a lid and eating with a spoon. Expect it to get a little messy, so do this where it will be easy to clean up. Remember, it will take practice and it's ok if it's messy at first!



Activities for 2 Years

- At two years, children still may not be able to speak clearly or say entire words. That's ok! Continue to encourage them with the right way to say words. "That's your elbow!" or "Look at the airplane!"
- Kick or roll a ball back and forth with your child. Encourage others to join in to show about sharing and including others.
- Let a child play "dress up" with costumes, shoes and/or hats that are around the house. This is another form of "pretending" and using their imagination.
- Let your child try new foods that are safe for their age (check with your doctor about how to identify food allergies.) Offer different kinds of healthy foods. Sometimes it takes several tries for a child to accept and learn to like certain fruits and vegetables.



Tip

If your child ever eats or drinks things that aren't meant to be swallowed or ingested, call the Poison Helpline!

POISON HELP LINE:
800-222-1222

Activities for 18 Months

- It is fun to watch a child's imagination at work! Encourage them to pretend by "feeding" their baby with a bottle or having them "make" you pretend meals to eat.
- Start giving your child easy choices to make, like whether they want to wear socks and shoes or just sandals to go outside. Do they want to color with crayons or do some finger painting today?
- Your child will likely throw a lot of fits around this age—that's normal. They are learning boundaries and that they can't do everything they want when they want. You can try to re-direct them to do other things, but sometimes when you're at home, it's ok to just ignore their fit until they move on. They will grow out of it as they get older.
- Now is a good time to learn the names of body parts—point to your eyes and say, "These are Mommy's eyes! Where are [child's name]'s eyes?"

Watch as your child plays with others to help correct inappropriate behavior, like not sharing or yelling/hitting. Step in when you need to help them learn how to solve a problem with a playmate. Be sure to also point out positive interactions. "I really liked how you shared your toy with Sarah! It looked like you two had a lot of fun with it!"



What to Do If You're Worried About Your Child's Development

All the information in this guide is offered as examples of what most children are able to do at different ages and activities that may help them to reach certain milestones. However, these are just a few examples of many for each age group. When a child is assessed for milestones at each age, experts watch for a variety of signs and skills that indicate they are developing as they should be. Even if a child is behind, there are ways and services to help them. That is why watching for milestones is important—the sooner we can identify that a child needs extra help, we can get them the support they need for a better future!



If you are concerned that your child is not showing the behaviors or skills at any of the ages listed, please discuss it with your doctor or [contact us](#). We have a network of caring family support specialists who can help your children learn the skills they need to succeed. Our child development experts can meet with you and your child to complete a full assessment. We will help you understand if your child is developing appropriately or if they could benefit from additional help. If your child needs support services, we will help connect you to the right services in your area.

Child and Family Resource Network

Child and Family Resource Network offers free family support programs throughout nine southwest Iowa counties. Our programs meet either as groups or offer personal support through one-on-one help from family support specialists.

Our programs and specialists help with:

- Child and social development skills
- Developmental milestones
- New parent support
- Family resources
- Nursing support

**CONTACT US ANYTIME
FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT
CHILD DEVELOPMENT!**

Visit our website at
childandfamilyresourcenetwork.org
or call/text us at **(712) 355-2615**

