

## Patient Factsheet

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# Developmental Concerns in Children

## What is it?

GPs use [milestones](#) to track your child's development. Milestones are the skills and tasks children can do at different ages. For example, smiling at 6 weeks, or forming words around 12 months. Milestones are based on five domains: fine motor, gross motor, speech, social, and cognitive.

If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, there may be a cause for concern. Sometimes, missing milestones can be a sign of a developmental disorder.

It's normal to feel worried for your child. Try to stay positive, and continue to support your child's needs. There is plenty of help available. And, the good news is early treatment can make a huge difference.

## The Five Developmental Domains



### Fine motor skills

Small muscle movements, such as typing, buttoning, eating, and zipping



### Gross motor skills

Large movements, such as crawling, running and jumping



### Speech skills

Involve language, such as speaking, listening and following instructions



### Social skills

Playing with others, getting dressed, going to the toilet



### Cognitive skills

Problem solving and emotional awareness

## What will my GP do now?

The next step is to work out what may be causing your child's delay so you can arrange the most suitable treatment.

Your GP will:

- Look for any health conditions that could be adding to the problem
- Treat any existing issues, such as eczema or glue ear
- Check all your child's injections are up to date
- Arrange hearing and eye tests
- Refer you to an allied health professional for early intervention

### Allied health professions

- **Speech pathology** for language and speech
- **Physiotherapy** for walking and balance
- **Occupational therapy** for physical and sensory concerns
- **Psychology** for cognitive, social, and behaviour concerns

If your child is not meeting more than one milestone, your GP may refer you to a paediatrician for assessment and treatment.

## What will my GP do in the future?

You should see your GP regularly, even if you are also seeing an allied health professional or paediatrician. Your GP will want to track your child's progress and keep up-to-date with how things are going. Talk to your GP about how often to make an appointment.

In the future, you may need to see a specialist if you haven't already been referred to one. Your GP can advise you on this after seeing your child's progress.

**Supporting yourself** Remember to take time to look after yourself as well. Here are some helpful parent support websites:

HIPPY – [hippyaustralia.org.au](http://hippyaustralia.org.au)

Raising Children – [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)

Families NSW – Love, talk, sing, read, play – [families.nsw.gov.au](http://families.nsw.gov.au)

Resourcing Parents – [resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au](http://resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au)



### What can I do?

There may not be a 'quick fix' for your child. But, with the right support and early intervention, you can make a difference in your child's growth.

Assessing delays takes time, but you can help this process by:

- Being aware of your child's growth
- Tracking any changes
- Arranging health checks with your GP
- Arranging referrals
- Being there for your child, by offering plenty of emotional support and love
- Supporting yourself, and taking care of your health and wellbeing

As a parent, you can also self-refer to a health professional or paediatrician. But, if a referral is made through your GP, you can get a Medicare rebate. Speak to your GP about this.

### What questions should I ask my doctor?



- ☐ *What can I do to help my child now?*
- ☐ *What can I do to help my child over time?*
- ☐ *When should I make another appointment?*
- ☐ *How quickly can I expect results?*
- ☐ *What happens if my child gets worse?*

### What supports are available?

#### Assessment

The [South Western Sydney Local Health District Child and Family Health Nursing Team](#) provide a free developmental screen for young children. If needed, this team can refer your child to the Child Development Service for a paediatric review. You or your GP can refer by phoning **1800 455 511**.

#### Early intervention programs

South Western Sydney Local Health District Primary and Community Health provide free assessment and intervention for young children.

- For the dietetics team, call **4633 4179**
- For the occupational therapy team, call **4633 4105**
- For the physiotherapy, team call **9780 2899**
- For the psychology team, call **8788 4200**
- For the speech pathology team, call **4633 4333**

#### Tharawal Aboriginal Medical Service

Health checks and care for Indigenous of all ages. Visit [tacams.com.au](http://tacams.com.au) or phone **4628 4837** to book a health check.

#### Private care

Access private paediatricians or allied health professionals. Speak to your GP about rebates available.