

Developmental Delay

Developmental delay describes the behavior of young children whose development in moving, talking, or playing is slower than other children of the same age.

The delay can be in any area(s) of development, such as movement (motor), speech, thinking, or self-care skills, and may or may not result from a specific condition. For example, a child with Down syndrome often has developmental delay in several areas, including motor, speech, and thinking skills. Other children have developmental delay without receiving a specific diagnosis.

Signs and Symptoms

When children's motor skills are delayed, they might not run, skip, or jump with other children because they have not yet developed age-appropriate skills, and cannot keep up with their peers.

During infancy, a child is first suspected to have developmental delay if common milestones are delayed, such as:

- Holding the head upright and looking around by 4 months
- When lying on stomach, pushes up on hands by 4-5 months
- Sitting without support by about 6 months
- Walking by approximately 12 months

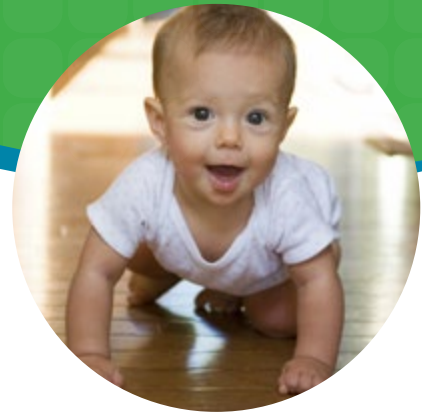
Some infants with a motor developmental delay have hypotonia, or low muscle tone, which contributes to their movement difficulties.

Children with sensory problems may have movement difficulty, such as hypersensitivity to touch or an inability to plan and problem-solve movement activities. Children who have some or all of these problems also might develop social or emotional problems, such as a fear of trying new motor skills like running, jumping, and skipping.

HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

A physical therapist will first evaluate your child and the environment in which they move, and conduct an appropriate and detailed test to determine the child's specific strengths and weaknesses.

The physical therapist can give detailed guidance on building motor skills 1 step at a time to reach established goals. The physical therapist will also teach the family ways in which they can help the child practice skills during everyday activities.



About **10%**
of all **toddlers and preschoolers** in the United States are classified with having developmental delay.