

Baby development milestones in the first three years

BABY DEVELOPMENT ARTICLES

ARTICLE

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Different children tend to meet physical growth and cognitive development milestones at different times. To encourage them, parents can offer constant engagement and a nutrient-rich diet.

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Every parent has been brought to near tears, contemplating their child's growth. Every milestone in their child's life, from their first word to the first step they take, is cause for celebration. Just watching your child grow, from day to day, is a beautiful thing.

All these moments add up to physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language milestones that your child will achieve before they reach their third birthday.

The first year: leaps and bounds

It's not uncommon for newborns to smile at their mothers in the first few weeks. They're also able to shift their eyes towards the source of a sound and have a startled reaction to sudden, loud noises.¹

By the time they're three months old, your baby will be able to raise their head and chest while lying on their stomach.² And by the following month, they'll recognise your voice and will try 'talking' to you through cooing sounds.³

Most babies are able to sit with support between three and five months, and without support at six months. A six-month milestone occurs when the baby can stand while being held up.⁴

At around seven or eight months, your baby will learn how to push themselves up,

onto their hands and knees. This is a precursor to crawling, which most babies start to do at around the nine-month mark. However, some start from month six or seven, while others only crawl later – or even bypass the process and go straight from sitting to standing to walking!

At around seven to eight months, your baby will start to copy your actions and enjoy playing games like peek-a-boo. By 10 months, your baby should be able to identify who you're referring to when you say 'mummy' or 'daddy' and be able to respond to words like 'no'.⁵

At around 10 months, your baby will be able to stand while holding onto support. They should also be able to walk while holding onto furniture, an action that is known as 'cruising'.

The second year: from walking to running

Your baby is a toddler now; they may start walking on their own between 12 and 15 months, although this could happen anytime before the 18-month mark. After walking (naturally) comes running.

Between 12 to 15 months, they'll also be able to build blocks or scribble with a crayon. They'll begin to show empathy around 14 months, and might get upset when they see other people crying. During these months, they'll also be able to hug you and point to body parts when you name them.⁶

By 15 months, their babbling includes real words; by the age of two, they'll be able to form sentences with two or three words. And by 18 months, they'll be able to follow simple instructions.

You might also see some temper tantrums by the time they turn two, as they've learnt to develop emotions such as anger, frustration and excitement. They'll also have learnt everyday skills like eating by themselves and helping you get them dressed. And they'll use their own name to refer to themselves. This is when they learn about pretend play too, such as playing with their dolls.⁷

The third year: complex concepts

Toilet training starts between the ages of two and three. They'll be able to speak in sentences of three or more words, and you can have simple conversations with them. Most people will be able to understand them, including strangers. They can also follow two or three-step instructions and answer 'who, what and where' questions.

They are now more aware of other people's feelings and can show concern for others. And they'll continue to have temper tantrums as they're still unable to express their feelings in words.

You toddler now understands the concepts of size and time. They'll learn through play activities such as playing dress up, having tea parties and playing with others. They'll be able to bathe and feed themselves with just a bit of help and can also help with simple chores.⁸

They'll be able to climb stairs independently and get better at throwing, catching and kicking a ball. Other things they can do include riding a tricycle, jumping on the spot, and turn the pages of a book.

All these changes, from zero to three years of age, may not necessarily follow a rigid schedule. Babies tend to meet growth and development milestones at different times. Parents can help move their kids along from one developmental milestone to another, through constant engagement and feeding them the right nutrients at the right time.

If you're worried about your baby's development, speak to your paediatrician for reassurance or advice.⁹

References:

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