

FACT SHEET

Developmental Delays

Developmental delay is more than just being “slower to develop” or a “little behind”. It means your child is continually behind in skills other kids their age have.

For example, a baby who isn't rolling over by 4 months may be just a little behind in that one skill. But if he also isn't able to hold his head up and push up when lying on his tummy, he's behind in more than one motor skill. That's a sign of a developmental delay. (If you're noticing this in your child, there are many ways to help.)

Developmental delays may be caused by short-lived issues, such as a speech delay being caused by hearing loss from ear infections or a physical delay being caused by a long hospitalization. Delays may also be early signs of learning and attention issues. While it's not always clear what is causing the delay, early intervention can often help kids catch up. Some kids still have delays in skills when they reach school age.

A developmental delay can occur in just one area or in a few. A global developmental delay is when kids have delays in at least two areas.

Kids develop skills in five main areas of development. These include: Cognitive (or thinking) skills, Social and emotional skills, Speech and language skills, Fine and gross motor skills and Activities of daily living.

Fine and gross motor skills are assessed and managed by your Physiotherapist.

This is the ability to use small muscles (fine motor), particularly in the hands, and large muscles (gross motor) in the body. Babies use fine motor skills to grasp objects. Toddlers and preschoolers use them to do things like hold utensils, work with objects and draw. Babies use gross motor skills to sit up, roll over and begin to walk. Older children use them to do things like jump, run and climb stairs.

Follow your instincts. You know your baby best, so you're likely to spot problems – or potential problems – early. If you have a question or concern, check it out, even if it's just for reassurance.

- > It might be helpful to jot down your impressions before the appointment.
- > Is something in particular bothering you about the way your baby moves?
- > Do they seem to have lost a milestone that they previously reached? Have you noticed any specific signs of a physical delay?

If you are concerned about your child's motor skill development, book an appointment with our physio today for an assessment.

