



A Guide To Your Child's Gross & Fine Motor Development

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Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Your child's ability to control movements and respond to his/her environment begins to develop even before birth. Each baby is unique and grows at his/her own rate. That is why there is a wide variety of "normal" in development. Although this is a gradual, individualized process, most babies do go through a series of developmental milestones around certain ages.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide:

- A reference to help guide you through your child's development and what to expect at certain stages.
- A resource to direct you if you suspect or have questions/concerns about your child's development.

Your doctor/pediatrician will be your most direct resource to your child's growth. However, you as parents and caregivers are the best at determining whether your child is having difficulties in their development. Trust your judgment! If you have concerns, don't hesitate to bring it to the attention of your doctor. If you suspect a problem, you can also contact a Brooks Rehabilitation location nearest you to schedule an evaluation. We have therapists specialized in pediatrics to assist you.

Please visit our website at
BrooksRehab.org

for a complete list of our conveniently located outpatient locations.



This booklet was developed by physical and occupational therapists to describe various developmental milestones and steps involved in gross motor, fine motor, self-help, and play skills.

Physical therapists can help your child develop the ability to move their large muscle groups in a skilled and purposeful manner. These skills are often referred to as “gross motor control.” Crawling, sitting, walking, running, and jumping are examples of gross motor skills.

Occupational therapists help children succeed at various tasks involved in becoming independent, productive, and happy individuals. These tasks and skills can vary depending on age and developmental stage. Occupational therapists address activities of daily living (feeding, dressing), fine motor skills (manipulation, pre-writing/writing skills), visual-perceptual skills and interaction/social skills to help children become more independent and engaging in their environment.

1

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By

1 MONTH

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Turns head from cheek to cheek when on tummy
- Lifts head momentarily when on tummy
- Lifts head (bobbing) when held in vertical at shoulder
- Kicks legs rhythmically 2-3 cycles when on back
- Looks at faces and objects

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Arms move when shown a toy (more random)
- Arms move together (symmetrically)
- Grasps rattle/finger when placed in baby's hand
- Randomly brings hand to mouth
- Follows a moving face with eyes while lying on back (supine)
- Establishes eye contact
- Relaxes body when held, cuddled
- Enjoys and needs lots of physical contact (tactile stimulation)



2

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By

2 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Turns from sidelying to back by turning head
- Brings hand to mouth when on back and when lying on side
- Lifts head and turns to sides when on tummy

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Follows toy in 180 degree continuous arc when on back
- Shows awareness of hands when holding rattle
- Looks from one object to another
- Involuntarily drops objects
- Brings hand to mouth
- Responds to social interaction with smiling



3

Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

3 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Holds head in midline when on back
- Lifts head and upper trunk while placing weight on forearms 3 seconds when on tummy
- Glances at toy that is placed in hand when on back
- Holds hands open or loosely closed when on back
- Brings hand together (midline) when lying on back (supine)
- Able to see with downward gaze when on back or supported sitting (chin tucking)

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Hands more open (50% of time or more)
- Tries to reach for object (cannot grasp)
- Holds rattle momentarily when placed in hand
- Brings hands/objects to mouth
- Follows/tracks moving object with eyes in supported sit (past midline)
- Enjoys social play
- Socializes/engages with anyone (stranger/parent)
- Vocalizes in response to adult talk and smile

4

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By 4 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Rolls from back to side
- Holds head steady and erect in supported position (head control is completed)
- Plays while on side
- Reaches with both hands to toy
- Brings rattle to mouth with both hands when on back



FINE MOTOR/ SELF-HELP/ PLAY SKILLS

- Brings both hands to toy over chest and plays with fingers
 - Reaches and grasps a toy/block
 - Clasps hands together
 - Hands open most of time
- Grasps objects with contact to palm
 - Pats bottle
 - Recognizes parent
 - Repeats enjoyable activities

5

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By 5 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Brings feet to hands and holds for 3 seconds when on back
- Begins to roll from tummy to back
- Extends both arms fully when on tummy

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Transfers objects from hand to hand
- Holds 2 objects at a time (one in each hand)
- Picks up objects using “raking” motion with fingers
- Drops objects
- Holds bottle independently
- Displays stranger anxiety
- Lifts arms to parents
- Explores parent’s facial features



Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By

6 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Rolls from tummy to back purposefully
- Rolls from back to tummy purposefully
- Sits alone 5-10 seconds while placing hands forward on surface to support self
- Pushes entire chest off surface with extended arms and open hands in prone
- Reaches with 1 hand for toy while on extended arm when on tummy
- Brings feet to mouth when on back
- Catches self forward by extending arms forward and opening hands in sitting when losing balance

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Reaches with one hand/arm at a time
- Bangs object/block on table
- Follows objects with eyes without head movement
- Holds small objects between index/middle fingers and palm (radial palmer grasp); may not use thumb yet
- Brings bottle to mouth with hands
- Shows separation anxiety



9

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By 9 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Raises to hands and knees position and rocks
- Creeps on hands and knees 5 feet using alternating arm and leg movement
- Transitions from hands and knees position by turning via side-sitting to sitting on bottom
- Pivots on bottom when sitting using arms or legs
- Sits steadily and unsupported for more than 1 minute
- Catches self to side by extending arm to side with open hand in sitting when losing balance
- Stands while holding on to furniture with wide base of support

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Bangs 2 blocks together and starting to clap hands together
 - Voluntarily releases objects
 - Takes cube out of cup/container
 - Points/probes with index finger
 - Grabs small objects with thumb and side of index finger (lateral pinch)
 - Finger feeds
 - Extends toys to show/share
 - Holds spoon



12

Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

12 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Pulls to standing at furniture by leading with 1 leg
- Lowers self to sitting on floor from standing at furniture without falling
- Stands alone 3-5 seconds
- Walks with 1 hand held 4 steps
- Walks along furniture (cruising)
- Catches self backwards by extending arm in backward direction with open hand when losing balance
- Flings tennis ball by straightening shoulder or elbow when standing
- Rolls ball forward in sitting by using hand or arm contact

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Claps hands together well
- Puts 3 or more objects in container
- Stacks 2 blocks
- Points with index finger
- Uses pincer grasp to pick up objects (index finger and thumb)
- Marks paper with crayon
- Starting to bring spoon to mouth
- Gives toy to familiar adult upon request
- Shows toy preference
- Imitates clapping/waving

15

Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By
15 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Stands alone well
- Creeps up stairs 3 steps
- Transfers to standing by pushing through hands and feet
- Stoops to pick up toy from floor and return to standing without losing balance
- Able to change direction while walking without losing balance

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Pulls toy on string behind while walking
- Places many objects in container without removing any
- Grasps 2 objects in one hand
- Stacks 3 blocks
- Holds arms and legs out for dressing
- Feeds self with spoon (some spillage)
- Removes both socks
- Hugs and kisses parents



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Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

18 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Climbs in adult chair and turns around to sit
- Seats self in small chair
- Pushes and pulls large toys around the room
- Carries large toy while walking without losing balance
- Steps on or kicks into ball in attempt to imitate kicking ball
- Walks backwards 5 steps while pulling toy on string

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Use both hands – one holds, other manipulates
- Stacks 4-6 blocks
- Imitates vertical stroke
- Grasps crayon with thumb and finger towards paper
- Removes shoes with laces untied
- Puts toys away with assistance
- Manipulates objects with intent (pushing car, etc.)
- Feels easily frustrated
- Uses gesture in play
- Parallel play



21

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By 21 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Squats to play
- Walks up stairs with 1 hand on rail using step-to gait (placing both feet on 1 step)
- Walks down stairs with 1 hand held using step-to gait (placing both feet on 1 step)
- Kicks ball forward 3 feet without falling
- Throws tennis ball overhead 3 feet while standing
- Moves on “ride-on” toy without pedals

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Imitates circular scribble
- Strings 1 one-inch bead
- Opens door by turning knob
- Holds small cup in one hand
- Helps with simple household tasks



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Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

24 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Runs without falling
- Walks up stairs 3 steps using step-to gait (placing both feet on 1 step) without holding on
- Walks down stairs 3 steps with 1 hand on rail using step-to gait (placing both feet on 1 step)
- Throws tennis ball underhand 3ft while standing
- Throws tennis ball 3-5 feet in direction of target
- Jumps up 2 inches from floor with both feet
- Jumps from bottom step, may lead with 1 foot

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Imitates horizontal stroke
- Imitates 3-block train
- Snips with scissors
- Holds crayon with thumb and fingers
- Washes hands
- Holds spoon in fingers — palm up
- Pulls pants down with assistance
- Displays shyness in outside situations
- Engages best in peer interaction with one older child, not a sibling
- Initiates own play, but needs supervision to carry out ideas
- Dramatizes using a doll

30

Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

30 MONTHS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Imitates one foot standing 1 second
- Walks on tiptoes 5 steps and maintains balance
- Throws tennis ball overhead 7 feet by moving arm upward and back
- Jumps down 8-10 inches with both feet without losing balance

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Places six pegs in a pegboard
- Builds an 8-block tower
- Cuts across a piece of paper
- Imitates a circle
- Uses a fork
- Dresses self with assistance
- Insists on doing things independently
- Resists change; difficulties with transitions
- Takes pride in achievements
- Participates in circle games; plays interactive games



3

Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

3 YEARS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Jumps down 14-24" elevation with 2-footed take-off and landing
- Jumps forward 24" with 2-footed take-off and landing
- Walks up stairs while placing 1 foot on each step (alternating gait) 4 steps without holding on
- Peddles tricycle short distances
- Makes sharp turns around corners when running
- Avoids obstacles in path
- Imitates one foot standing 1-5 seconds
- Catches ball with hands and arms extended
- Climbs jungle gyms and ladders
- Kicks ball 6 feet

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Imitates a cross
- Puts together simple puzzles
- Cuts along a line
- Builds 9-10 block tower
- Self-feeds with spoon, some spilling
- Puts shoes/socks on
- Brushes own hair
- Plays with another child
- Shares toys with another
- Stays in group during activity

4

Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By 4 YEARS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Stands on one foot for 5 seconds
- Stands on tiptoes with hands overhead more than 3 secs.
- Hops on one foot forward 1-3 times
- Walks down stairs by placing 1 foot on each step (alternating gait) 4 steps
- Able to walk on 2" line for 10 feet without stepping off once
- Throws tennis ball underhand 10 feet using upper trunk rotation, arms and legs moving in opposition and initiating throw by moving arm down and back
- Pedals tricycle for long distances and able to turn corners and make u-turn
- Gallops 5 feet

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Demonstrates a hand preference
- Holds marker/crayon with thumb, index, and middle finger (static tripod grasp)
- Imitates a square
- Matches 6 colors
- Cuts out a small square/triangle
- Buttons front-opening clothing
- Undresses daily at designated times without reminders
- Dresses independently when asked
- Verbalizes feelings prior to physical expression
- Participates in cooperative play
- Comforts playmates in distress
- Quiets down after active period and waits for instructions
- Returns objects to assigned place when asked

5

Gross & Fine Motor Skills
Most Babies Develop By

5 YEARS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Completes somersault with chin tuck and without turning to side
- Gallops 10 feet with weight transferred smoothly and evenly; arms move freely in opposition to legs
- Jumps and turns so feet land in opposite direction from starting position (180 degree turn in the air)
- Hops 8 consecutive times on one foot followed by 8 hops on other foot
- Skips 8 steps using opposing arm and leg movements and using alternating feet while maintaining balance
- Hits a target with tennis ball 12 feet away using overhead throw
- Catches tennis ball with hands only from 5 feet away
- Runs while pumping arms

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP / PLAY SKILLS

- Uses a refined and fluid grasp on crayons/pencil (dynamic tripod grasp)
- Imitates triangle
- Prints own name
- Prints 10-19 letters per minute
- Draws a picture of at least 3 objects
- Cuts with a knife
- Places shoes on correct feet and laces shoes
- Plays games with rules (Candyland, Checkers, Kickball)



Gross & Fine Motor Skills Most Babies Develop By

6 YEARS

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- Hops 20 feet without falling or letting free foot touch the floor
- Skips 10 feet using opposing arm and leg movements and using alternating feet, while maintaining balance and rhythm
- Stands on one foot for 10 seconds for each leg without swaying and with hands on hips
- Completes 5 sit-ups in 20 seconds
- Completes 8 push-ups (lift off chest only) in 20 seconds
- Bounces tennis ball on floor and catches it with 1 hand
- Kicks ball so that it travels 12 feet in the air
- Walks on tiptoes 15 feet

FINE MOTOR/SELF-HELP/PLAY SKILLS

- Prints 14-25 letters per minute
- Ties shoes
- Dresses/undresses without help
- Zips/unzips
- Able to play games such as "Twister"
- Uses right and left to direct others
- Plays difficult games without knowing rules beforehand
- Accepts friendly teasing
- Pauses to allow others to speak
- Offers to help others voluntarily



Delays In Gross/Fine Motor, Self-Help, And Play/Interaction Skills

Motor Planning/Praxis – the ability to come up with, organize, and carry out a sequence of unfamiliar actions and complex body movements.

Dyspraxia – difficulty planning and carrying out skilled, unfamiliar, motor acts in the correct sequence.

Developmental Disabilities – deficits related to cognitive and physical development (mental retardation, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, Fragile X, etc.)

Sensory processing challenges

– difficulty processing, modulating, and adapting to information from the environment (sounds, sights, movement, touch, smell).

Fine motor control

– difficulties with manipulation skills, eye hand coordination, tool use, visual-perceptual skills, and handwriting.



Information for this brochure was adapted from:

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