



Building Strong Families

Help with Learning Can Make a Big Difference!

Young children develop and learn new skills at different rates. You may have one child who learned to walk at 10 months and another at 13 months. Some children start talking early and others take longer. One infant may sleep through the night at a few weeks old and others take months for this to happen. All these are normal.

Sometimes, a child does not seem to be developing and learning a new skill. Some children need extra help and support to learn. There are programs and trained experts who can help. The younger a child is when you get help, the better chance he has to learn the needed skill.

Here are five areas of children's development:

- Physical development - moving, seeing, and hearing.
- Language development - being able to talk, understand, and express needs.
- Emotional development - relating to others.
- Self help skills - the ability to do things independently, such as eating, dressing, and bathroom routines.
- Being able to think and learn.



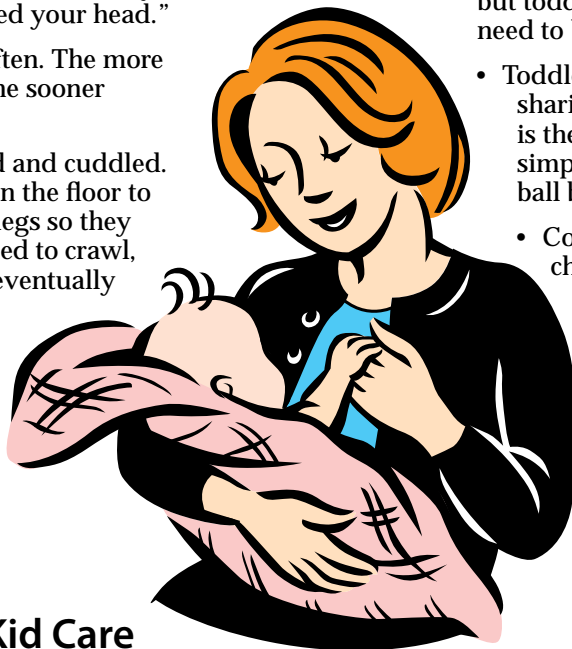
If you notice your child having difficulty with something, watch closely over time. You might want to take some notes including the date and what you see happening or not happening. A delay can be a cause for concern. If you feel your child would benefit from help, there are good early intervention programs. An evaluation done by early childhood professionals can let you know if there is something to be concerned about or if your child just needs more time to develop a skill. Early intervention services are usually free. After an assessment is done, you can decide whether or not to accept services for your child.

If a delay is recognized and services are recommended, a plan will be developed by the early intervention specialist, you, and if your child is enrolled in child care, your child's caregiver. The plan will identify your child's needs and list ways to help. The early childhood specialist will work with your child in places where your child learns: at home and at child care. Your permission is always required for any services provided. Take advantage of services that are available to help your child learn better. In Pennsylvania call the **CONNECT** help line at **1-800-692-7288** for information on where to call in your area. An Early Intervention brochure, with useful information for families, can be ordered and is also available in Spanish.

Basic Learning

The first few years are basic learning years for children. Children learn more in the first four years than any other time in their lives. Babies learn from everything they see and hear from the time they are born. Here are some important ways to help your child learn:

- Children learn from watching others. Be a good role model.
- Talk with your child as much as possible. Your baby can understand you even before learning to talk. Babies who are talked to a lot tend to use more words sooner.
- Describe what you are doing when you feed, diaper, wash, and dress your infant, and when you are doing things around the house. "I am washing the dishes now." "I am putting dishes on the table for dinner."
- Talk about feelings. When your baby's ball rolls out of reach, say, "You are mad because your ball rolled under the chair." Another example is, "Look, here comes Daddy. We are happy to see him." If your child falls and bumps his head, say, "That hurt when you bumped your head."
- Read to your infant often. The more language she hears, the sooner she will learn to talk.
- Babies need to be held and cuddled. They also need time on the floor to move their arms and legs so they develop muscles needed to crawl, sit up, stand up, and eventually walk and run!
- Play with your baby. Babies love games such as Peek-a-Boo or just banging blocks or a spoon on the high chair tray.
- Encourage your baby to reach for things. If a toy rolls under a chair, say, "Your toy car rolled under the table. Crawl over there to get it."
- As your baby becomes a toddler have him do things for himself. He will still need supervision, but will be able to learn to dress and feed himself, pick up toys, hang up a jacket, and many other things.
- Toddlers love to help. Have your toddler help set or clear the table, help put groceries away, or dust some of the furniture.
- It may seem like your toddler understands things, but toddlers forget easily. Rules and guidelines will need to be repeated often.
- Toddlers cannot understand the concept of sharing. Teach your toddler how to take turns. It is the first step in learning about sharing. One simple way to teach taking turns is by rolling a ball back and forth with your toddler.
- Continue to read, talk with, and play with your child often as he grows and learns even more. Your child learns so much from you. The early years are important learning years!



More from Better Kid Care

The Better Kid Care Web Site at www.betterkidcare.psu.edu has more information for parents. Look for other *Family Time-Work Time* issues, *Parents Count*, child care and activity tip sheets, snack ideas, choosing child care tips, school readiness information, and the monthly Better Kid Care E-Newsletter. To sign up for the E-Newsletter, send a request to BetterKidCareNews-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu.

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