

birth to
6 months

Issues in Development



In a nutshell

A developmental issue is something that happens as part of typical growth. These issues may cause you some concern as a parent or caregiver. Remember, these are common in most children. They are important steps in growth and development. When you understand these issues and know how to best react, you can support your child in a positive way.

- When you meet your baby's needs he learns to trust you and the world.
- A baby's brain and nervous system aren't completely developed and can be overloaded by too much stimulation.
- Your baby's crying can be very stressful for both of you.

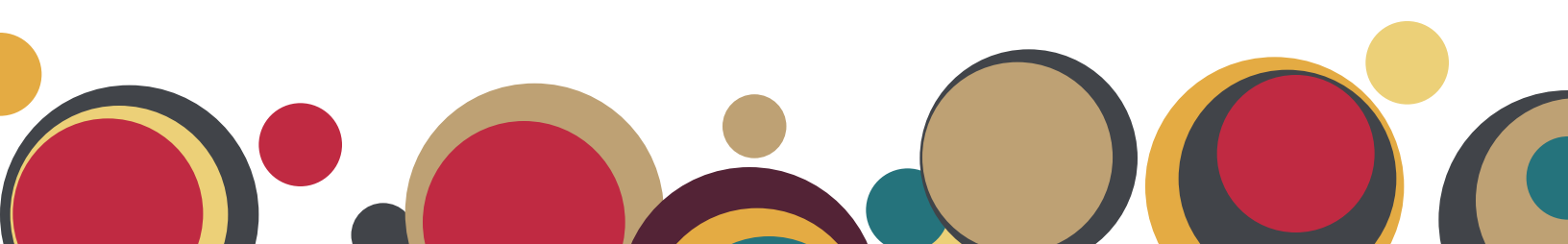
About Issues in Development

Attachment is the special bond that develops between babies and their primary caregivers in the first several years of life. When you meet your baby's needs, he learns to trust you and the world. With this trust you will develop a secure attachment to each other. This trusting bond will be the basis for other relationships throughout your child's life. Showing your child you love him and will take care of him builds a strong bond that is good for you and for your child. As a new parent, you may be worried that you will not do things right. Relax! As you and your baby get to know one another, you will feel better about your ability to meet his needs.

Babies take in the world through their senses, just as adults do. But a baby's brain and nervous system aren't completely developed and can sometimes be overloaded by too much noise, lights, smells, etc. Your baby may cope with this by going to sleep or withdrawing. She may also become irritable, have trouble sleeping, tense or arch her body, or be difficult to calm or console. Babies differ in their ability to tolerate stimulation. Your baby may be easy-going

and remain alert and happy. Or she may be more sensitive to over stimulation from her surroundings. Babies develop best when they can attend to one or two things at a time. Read your baby's cues to tell when she is becoming over stimulated. Try to keep her surroundings calm, organized and interesting.

Your baby's crying can be very stressful for both of you. Infants communicate their needs by crying. Some babies cry a little and are easily consoled, but others may cry for hours at a time and nothing seems to calm them. Hard crying for several hours straight is sometimes called colic. The causes of colic are hard to pinpoint. Babies with colic may have trouble handling stimulation. The crying often occurs at the end of the day after all of the stimulation finally accumulates. Colic is not caused by gas or something the baby or mother ate. It can be very stressful to care for a baby who cries for hours at a time. Ask your baby's doctor about his crying. Get as much rest as you can and call on others to give you a break. The good news is that colic usually disappears by four months of age.





Issues in Development How to's: Birth to 6 Months

- Go to your baby when she cries. Being held is a physical need for infants. You won't spoil your baby by meeting her needs. In fact, babies who are picked up and soothed cry less than those who are left to cry it out.
- Help your baby get into a routine and follow it. Getting into a routine will help your baby handle stimulation.
- Premature infants may become over stimulated more easily. Keep light levels low and swaddle preemies to help them cope.
- Swaddling often helps a crying baby calm down. Wrap your baby snugly in a receiving blanket with his arms at his sides. Don't cover his face.
- Read your baby's cues to learn how she reacts to things around her. Excess sleeping, irritability, pushing away or becoming stiff, and crying that's hard to stop are all signs your baby is over stimulated. Take steps to provide a quiet place for your baby to regroup.
- Repetitive motion like rocking or swinging can quiet a crying baby. A stroller or car ride can also be soothing. Then there's the tried and true method of walking the floor with the baby.
- Toneless, 'white noise' can also soothe a crying baby. Try to gently make the same noise over and over, such as a 'shhhh, shhhh' noise. Sing the same song over and over. Some babies fall asleep if placed beside a running dryer or dishwasher. Try out several noises to see if your baby responds.
- Don't feel guilty about taking a break. Being with a crying baby is one of the most stressful experiences you will have as a parent. Leave your baby with someone you trust, if only for a little while. If you find yourself getting really stressed out, put your baby in his crib, close the door, and go to another room. Take some deep breaths. Soon you will be able to return to your baby with a new outlook.
- Never, ever hit or shake a baby because she won't stop crying. If you feel you are losing control, put your baby in a safe place such as a crib and step away. Call a friend or relative and ask for help. Or, call the ParentLink Warmline at 1-800-552-8522.

Issues in Development

6 to 12 months



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- When your baby learns to move around, life is very different.
- It's important for everyone in the family to get a good night's sleep.
- Your baby notices you are gone or when unfamiliar people approach him.

About Issues in Development

When your baby learns to move around by himself, life is very different! Suddenly he can roll, crawl or walk and reach objects he never could before. At this age his curiosity prompts him to be on the move. What an exciting time! But it can also be a stressful time for a family. Older brothers and sisters might become frustrated when your baby can reach their toys. You must always watch to keep your moving baby safe. It seems like this little person can get around in the blink of an eye.

It's important for everyone in the family to get a good night's sleep. After 3 or 4 months of age, most babies sleep longer through the night. Around 6 months of age, a baby who has been sleeping through the night might begin waking up. She can now remember that mom and dad are somewhere. And that somewhere is not with her. Encourage your baby to go back to sleep. Rest is needed for good health. You make the decision about where your child sleeps. Place your baby on her back to sleep at nap and night time. She should sleep alone in a safety-approved crib on a firm mattress with a tight-fitting sheet. Remove all loose bedding, soft objects and toys, fluffy pillows, bumper pads, blankets and

comforters from the crib area. It's as simple as 'ABC': Babies should sleep Alone, on their Backs, in a Crib.

Around 7 or 8 months of age, your baby will begin to notice when you leave him. When you leave, or when your baby notices you are gone, he may cry. He is attached to you, and wants to be with you all the time. This may upset you, but babies usually recover quickly after parents are out of sight. This will lessen as your baby gets older. This feeling is called separation anxiety. Your baby may cling to you when someone unfamiliar approaches him. This is called stranger awareness. The person may be someone he's familiar with, even his grandparents or an aunt or uncle. These feelings happen because your baby looks to you for protection and comfort. It's quite surprising when suddenly your baby shrinks from grandma's open arms when he was ready for a hug a few weeks before. When you are out in public, your baby may be upset by strangers who want to talk to him. Support your baby with love. Don't make him go to someone when he resists. Explain to friends and relatives that this is normal for babies this age. As he grows, this behavior will lessen.



Issues in Development How to's: 6 to 12 Months

- Baby proof the areas of your home where your child is able to move around by herself. It's easier to remove things that are dangerous or off-limits than to constantly say no to a curious baby.
- Allow your child lots of time on the floor to move around freely. If your baby isn't crawling yet, put him on his tummy several times a day for as long as he is happy. Don't leave a baby alone on the floor, even if you think he can't move around. There's always that first time!
- Be patient as your baby explores her world. She doesn't understand your words yet. Her development is driving her to explore. She's not disobeying you when she returns to something over and over again. Change the environment and just keep removing her from what tempts her.
- Begin a bedtime routine that helps your little one fall asleep by himself. If he doesn't need to rely on you to hold him or rock him, he'll be able to put himself back to sleep if he wakes up in the middle of the night.
- If your baby wakes up in the middle of the night, tend to her needs without a lot of interaction. Keep the lights off and don't talk or play. Your baby will get the message that night is for sleeping, not playing.
- Continue to follow safety guidelines for safe sleep and preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Put your baby down to sleep on his back, even if you know he will roll over. Make sure the mattress he sleeps on is firm, and there are no pillows, blankets or comforters in the crib area. It's as simple as 'ABC': Babies should sleep Alone, on their Backs, in a Crib.
- Always say good-bye to your baby when you leave him, even if he cries. Don't sneak out. Your baby trusts you. Babies are less upset and for a shorter period of time when they know their parents are leaving.
- Be sure you can trust the person you leave your baby with. Never allow someone else to hit or shake your child. Make sure those who care for your baby have the patience to care for an active, curious baby.
- Support your child if she is afraid. Don't make her go to or talk to someone she is resisting. Give her time to warm up to less familiar people. Be your child's support with friends and relatives. Resist pressure to make your child go to someone, no matter how much they may want it.

Issues in Development

12 - 24 months



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A developmental issue is something that happens as part of typical growth. These issues may cause you, as a parent, some concern. Remember, these are common in most children. They are important steps in growth and development. When you understand these issues and know how to best react, you can support your child in a positive way.

- Developing autonomy is a major developmental task that begins around your child's first birthday.
- Toilet learning is easiest when your child shows signs of readiness.
- A temper tantrum shows your child is over stimulated and stressed.

About Issues in Development

Developing autonomy is a major developmental task beginning around your child's first birthday. Autonomy is a feeling of being an individual. Social emotional growth for autonomy is life-long, but it begins now. Your child wants to "do it myself" now. "No" might be his favorite word. He doesn't always mean to be negative. Usually he just wants to be heard. He is learning that "no" is a very powerful word. Many times it is the answer to his requests. This important stage of development can be stressful to both you and your child.

Sometime during your child's second year you will start thinking about teaching her to use the toilet. Don't rush it. Toilet learning is easiest when your child shows signs of readiness. In order for toilet learning to be successful, nerves running from the brain to the small muscles that control elimination must be mature. This typically happens after 18 months of age, but the timing varies widely from child to child. Every child is on her own time table.

Look for your child:

- Staying dry for several hours at a time
- Waking up dry in the morning
- Pausing to wet or fill a diaper
- Sitting still for short periods of time

Trying to teach your child to use the toilet before you see these signs will be frustrating for both of you. Your child will soon understand the concept and have a way to tell you she has to go.

Temper tantrums may start in the second half of this year. During a temper tantrum, your child may have an angry or very sad cry. He may throw himself on the floor and hit his head, fists or feet against it. It's difficult to comfort a child having a temper tantrum. A temper tantrum shows that your child is over stimulated, frustrated or stressed. Sometimes he just wants something so much, he becomes overwhelmed and a meltdown results. Keep your cool when your child has a tantrum. Don't give in to what he wants. He may learn to use tantrum behavior to get his way. If you don't make a big deal over temper tantrums, they won't last as long and neither will this issue in your child's development.



Issues in Development How to's: 12 to 24 Months

- Your child is able to do more things for herself. Some cultures encourage children to feed themselves and do other everyday activities such as getting dressed at this age. In other cultures, this comes later. Pass on the cultural traditions that are important to your family.
- Learning a whole new way of toileting is a very complex task for your little one. Take the time that your child needs. Don't expect toilet learning to happen in a day. Being patient helps the process go smoothly. If you are feeling stressed about your child's toilet learning, talk to your healthcare provider or a parenting educator. Harsh physical punishment delays toilet learning and harms your child.
- Waiting until your child is ready will make learning to use the toilet easier. Your child may be physically ready if he remains dry for several hours at a time. He may wake up dry in the morning or tell you he has a wet or soiled diaper. You might see him stop what he is doing to urinate or have a bowel movement.
- Your child also has to understand what is happening in order to learn to use the toilet. She should be able to understand and use words related to toileting. Then she will be able to tell you when she has gone or has to go. She should be able to sit for a few minutes and concentrate. She needs to be able to wipe herself with help, pull her pants up and down with help, and wash her hands. As your child learns these things, you'll know that learning to use the toilet is just around the corner.
- Your child may have accidents after he's begun learning to use the toilet. He is not misbehaving. His body still isn't completely under his control. Sometimes he gets so involved in his play he forgets to run to the potty. Your patient guidance will help him learn.
- Keep your cool when your child has a temper tantrum. She's counting on you to be the one in control, because she's lost hers. Make sure your child is in a place where she can't get hurt. Keep an eye on her but don't give too much attention to the tantrum. Tell her you can talk with her when she can stop crying.
- If you lose your temper when your child has a tantrum, it shows her it's ok to lose control. When your child is calm, hug her and tell her you love her. Help her understand that she can use words to tell you what she wants.
- Try to head off tantrums by knowing your child's cues. If he is becoming over-active or "wired" he may be over stimulated. He may be more likely to have a tantrum if he's tired or hungry. Try to help him meet those needs before they become too great for him to handle.

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- Your child looks to you for love and support when he is frightened.
- Be patient while your child learns to use the toilet.
- Your child is able to experience shame, embarrassment, guilt and resentment.

About Issues in Development

It is common for young children to have fears. While you may know that there's no monster under the bed, your child's fear is very real to her. She looks to you for love and support when she is frightened. Calmly reassure your child that you will keep her safe. Don't put her down for being afraid or tell her that she shouldn't be frightened. Two-year-olds may have nightmares or night terrors. Night terrors occur when a child cries or screams in her sleep, but doesn't wake up. In fact, it's very difficult to wake a child who is having a night terror. When she does wake up, she has no memory of having a bad dream. Hold your child and reassure her that she's safe. Help her go back to sleep if she has wakened.

Be patient while your child learns to use the toilet. Many factors contribute to your child's readiness to learn toileting. Physically, nerves that control the bladder and bowels must be

mature. He needs to be able to sit for a few minutes and focus on a task. He also needs to understand and maybe say the words he needs in toileting. Your child is working hard to put all these things together at once. He is also developing independence, so he may not be so willing to do what you want him to, such as sit on the potty. Keep trying, and keep being firm, persistent and patient.

Your child is learning about what it means to be a person. She is old enough to feel self-conscious emotions such as embarrassment, shame, guilt and resentment. You can help your child develop healthy feelings for a lifetime by not shaming or teasing her. Avoid calling your child names or venting your anger with your child as the target. Show her how to change her behavior or make amends to handle feelings of guilt.



Issues in Development How to's: 24 to 36 Months

- Acknowledge that your child is afraid, no matter how unrealistic her fears may seem to you. When you tell her you understand that she's afraid, she will begin to feel secure enough to overcome her fears.
- Comfort your child when he is afraid. Don't make him do something he is afraid to do. In a few weeks he may be more willing to try the unfamiliar experience.
- Be confident that your child will learn to use the toilet without having accidents. When you truly trust your child to develop and use a new skill, you will communicate that trust to her. Your confidence in her will help her feel secure enough to have confidence in herself.
- Tell your child you are confident he can handle his fears or learn to do something new. He won't know you believe in him if you don't tell him.
- Use a firm, calm voice when correcting your child. She will listen better if she isn't afraid of your voice. Keep in control of your emotions, such as anger, so your child will learn to control her emotions too.
- Take a time out when you feel yourself losing control. Make sure your child is safe, then leave the room for a few minutes and get away from your child. Take deep breaths, do some exercise, or listen to calming music. You'll soon be ready to parent positively again and can return to your child.
- Young children can be embarrassed easily. When correcting your child's behavior, do it quietly and in private if possible. Don't call your child names like stupid or klutzy. Be positive and encouraging with your word choices.

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- Your child is learning to get along with other children and developing friendships.
- Three-year-olds have difficulty telling fantasy from what is real.
- Consistent rules and routines help your child control her behavior.

About Issues in Development

The preschool years are a time when friendships really bloom. Your child enjoys playing with other children. She can play well with others for longer periods of time. Your young child is still learning social skills such as sharing and taking turns. She needs your support to help her over the rough spots of developing social skills.

Three-year-olds have a hard time telling fantasy from reality. Parents can sometimes misinterpret this developmental issue. You might think that your child is lying. His emerging sense of self can lead your child to have strong wants and desires. For example, he may really want a cookie before dinner, and so he takes one from the cookie jar. He may tell you someone told him he could have one. His strong desire for the cookie leads him to “make up” the reason he can have

one. He cannot tell the difference between what he wants and reality. Children this age also have good imaginations, and their pretend play can seem real to them. Your child may insist that you set a place at the table for his imaginary friend. He might believe that he really is the superhero he watches on T.V.

Consistent rules and routines are important at this age. It is normal for your child to resist them. When your child has a routine for everyday activities such as going to bed, dressing and bathing, and eating, she knows what to expect and what is expected of her. She also feels secure when she knows that you will always keep the limits you set for her. She may test the limits from time to time, but your calm and consistent direction will help her learn.



Issues in Development How to's: Young Preschooler

- Make time for your child to play with other children his own age. Plan play dates to last a few hours. Young preschoolers can get tired or over stimulated if they last too long.
- Help your child choose toys he's willing to share before playmates come to play. If a toy is put away, neither he nor his friend can play with it, and he won't have to share it. This practice is respectful of your child's developing sense of possession.
- Have some planned activities ready if your child and her playmate are having trouble getting along or thinking of something to do. A well-planned snack at just the right time can sometimes save the day.
- Respect your child's choices in friends. Help her learn to get along with everyone, but also respect her choices. Just because you are friends with a child's parent does not mean that your child is compatible with that child.
- Help your child learn the difference between reality and pretend. Ask questions like, "Are we pretending now?" or "What really happened?" Don't disagree with your child unless it's really necessary. Point out that you see things differently. Be patient and don't fight about what is right and what is wrong. Many times your child will change her mind in a short while.
- Pretend with your child. If she has the opportunity to pretend, it may be easier for her to recognize what is real in another situation.
- Don't be quick to accuse your young preschooler of lying. Look at the situation and see if he is just having trouble telling what is real.
- Decide on a few reasonable rules and be consistent time after time. Your child will have trouble remembering too many rules, so pick the ones you really want to keep.
- Observe your child's cues to set up daily routines. For example, if you notice your child getting hungry and cranky in the late afternoon, build a snack time into his routine at that time.
- Create a bedtime routine that helps your child settle down to make the transition from an active day to sleep. Have a consistent bedtime. Do the same things every night. Set limits to help your little one follow the routine, such as letting him choose two books to read.
- Share your child's routines with others who care for her. Routines can help your child feel comfortable when she is not with you.

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- Self-regulation is the ability to control our behavior.
- Children this age engage in superhero, war or other pretend play.
- Power struggles are part of typical development.

About Issues in Development

Self-regulation or self-control is an important part of school readiness. This is a good time to help your child practice self-control. Self-regulation is being able to control emotions and behavior. It also means delaying acting on his wants and needs immediately. Sometimes those actions involve real needs, such as waiting for snack time when a child is hungry. Sometimes there are things that your child wants but must wait to have or do. For example, your child may need to remain seated and pay attention during a story time at the library. What he really wants to do is get up and talk to his friends.

Most 4- and 5-year olds have active imaginations. Some may enjoy superhero, war or other pretend play. They may include power figures in their play because they are developing a sense of their own power. For boys this may include weapons play or pretending to be superheroes. Girls may choose animals, horses or princess characters in their pretending. Every child will develop his or her own interests. Both boys and

girls may also pretend whatever their playmates are pretending. Pretending to be powerful helps preschoolers work through fears. It also helps them feel powerful and strong. You may be concerned about war or superhero play because children can be hurt or scared by their playmate. This is a good time to teach your child to solve problems peacefully.

A power struggle is an emotional battle of wills between a parent and child over who is in control. Power struggles are a part of typical development. It is not misbehavior. All parents want their children to grow up to be independent and capable. Trying to get her way in the preschool years is one way your child is preparing to control her own life as an adult. Power struggles usually happen when the child wants to do something one way, and the parent feels a different way is best. As the parent your job is to model problem solving and nurture your child's autonomy in a positive way.



Issues in Development How to's: Older Preschooler

- Teach your child how to do jobs around the house. He can be responsible for chores that are just right for his age and abilities. First, show him how you want the job done. Next, ask your child to be your helper. Then have the child do the job, with you as his helper. (Young children love being in charge of their parents!) Finally, when you feel the child can do the task well, let him do it on his own.
- Accept and recognize your child's efforts, even if the outcome is not quite what you expect. Keep in mind your goal—helping your child develop responsibility.
- Help your child develop self-control. Tell him what will happen in a situation and how you expect him to behave. Keep your voice friendly but firm. Your job is to teach. Praise your child for his efforts and actions when you see him controlling his behavior.
- Banning violent or superhero play rarely works. It may also keep your child from working through fears and conflict in a safe way. If you are concerned about the nature of your child's play, here are some suggestions:
 - Reduce T.V. viewing and time spent playing computer games. Help your child choose programs that avoid violent themes and are clear about fantasy and reality.
 - Avoid buying toys that support superhero play. Look for toys that can be used in a lot of ways, like blocks or art materials.
 - Have rules for safe play. Remind your child that violence hurts people. Teach kindness and peaceful problem solving.
 - Help your child to feel powerful in positive ways. Give him responsibility and point out his successes.
- Power struggles are so frustrating because of the emotions they bring out. A first step is to stay calm and diffuse the emotion. You have a much better chance of gaining your child's cooperation if you are in control. Remember it takes two to struggle. That doesn't mean that you should give in to your child. Allow him chances to express his personality and exercise his growing desire for independence.
- "Pick your battles" is great advice for parents facing power struggles. If the battle involves your child's health and safety, don't compromise. But there still may be choices you can offer your child. Offered frequently, children will learn to exercise their control by making a choice.
- If a power struggle involves a situation where you can compromise or offer choices, do so. You are modeling how to solve problems.
- Remember also that young children are most vulnerable when their physical needs are not met. Being tired, hungry or ill will be likely to lead to a melt down or a battle of wills. Start and follow routines that help your child be rested and nourished.