

Helping your child develop motor skills



What are motor skills?

Motor skills are when your child learns to control and use their muscles to move. Each child develops motor skills at different times. Watch your child carefully as they learn new skills. Protect them from falls and injuries as they learn. Do not leave your child alone.

What can I do to help my child learn new motor skills?

You can help your child when you:

- Spend time with them and watch what they can do. Play with your child and teach them to do new things. Help them learn new movements and skills as they grow.
- Once your child learns how to do something new, give them time to practice the new movements and skills.
- Praise your child for trying something new, even if they have not quite learned it yet.

Child's age	How you can help
Birth to 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place your child on their tummy during playtime several times each day.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Start with a few minutes and work up to longer periods of time.– They can do tummy time on your chest, lap, over a boppy pillow or towel roll, or on the floor.– Make sure someone watches them closely.– Play with them if they get fussy.• Hold your child often. Limit time they spend in positioning equipment (like infant swings, seats and carriers).• Place something in their hands to hold – a finger, rattle or blanket. Help your child bring the rattle to their mouth and switch it from hand to hand.• Help them turn their head left and right. Do this by shaking a rattle and moving it side to side.
4 to 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase your child's playtime on their tummy and on the floor.• Help them roll over from their back to their belly. Do this by bending 1 knee up and bringing it across to the other side.• Place toys on the ground just out of reach to help your child start moving and pivoting.• Place them in a sitting position. Have them use their arms to hold themselves up.• Hold your child in a standing position so they push down on their legs.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

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7 to 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your child push-button toys that light up or play a song. This teaches them that their actions can cause things to happen. • Place them in a sitting position. Place toys around them so they have to reach for them and return to sitting without falling. • Place them on hands and knees, practice rocking and place toys just out of reach to encourage reaching and crawling. • Once crawling, place pillows on the floor. Then have your child crawl over them. • Practice holding them in a standing position to encourage them to stand and bounce with flat feet. • Put a toy in each of your child's hands. Help your child bang them together. • Roll a ball and play catch with your child.
10 to 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your child to finger feed different food sizes, shapes and textures. • Allow your child to begin using utensils like a spoon. • Place toys that your child likes just out of reach, up on stable surfaces such as a couch or chair. This helps them practice standing and walking. • Give your child large, sturdy toys they can push while they walk. Watch them closely.
13 to 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your child build towers made of blocks and do peg puzzles. • Help them point at pictures in books and turn the pages. • Have your child pick up toys off the ground to practice squatting and standing. • Encourage your child to play with different toys and textures • Help your child imitate, or copy, your actions such as brushing hair or stirring with a spoon. • Teach them to drink from an open cup.
18 months to 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach your child to jump on flat, even surfaces or from a small step. • Play outside and teach them to climb. • Help your child learn to kick a ball. • Play chase to encourage them to run. • Have your child practice going up and down stairs with your help. • Teach them how to hold a large crayon. Have him scribble on paper. • Continue to encourage playing with shape sorters, large beads, and puzzles.

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Child's age	How you can help
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have your child practice going up and down stairs without your help.• Play catch with them. Use different sized soft balls.• Teach your child to pedal a tricycle.• Encourage them to dress themselves• Teach your child to cut paper with safety scissors. Help them until they learn how to do it on their own.• Paint, color and use play dough to strengthen their hands and fingers.
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give your child chances to take part in dance, swimming, gymnastics or ball sports.• Make an obstacle course to practice running, jumping, hopping and balancing.• Continue to encourage tracing letters and copying simple shapes.

Where can I get help?

If you think your child has delays in their motor skills:

- Call your child's doctor right away. Your child may need some tests to find the cause. The sooner your child gets help, the sooner something can be done to help with the problem and prevent more delays.
- If you have other questions or concerns about your child's motor skills, talk with the doctor. You may also call the Rehabilitation department at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at this phone number: _____.

Therapist: _____ Date: _____

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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