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Developmental Delay

Childhood is a phase of tremendous growth and learning. Being able to reach for a toy, calling “ma-ma”, waving “bye – bye” or taking those little steps are all developmental milestones. Your own two children are never the same; neither can they be compared to other children of their age. We are all the same but different at the same time!

No child is slow or fast, each child has his/her own unique developmental pace. Development is a journey, not a race.

If we are all the same, what is considered the normal range?

It is important that every child attains skills in a certain way as they are linked to one another, for example, a child has to get good head control before he/she can sit, before crawling, which precedes walking. If there is a delay in attaining one skill it may also delay the rest.

Some children develop in bursts and some steadily. If you are concerned, please speak to your paediatrician who should be able to identify if there are any Red Flags. If present, it is important to undertake a developmental assessment. Early intervention helps your child in catching up with the development.

Don't wait to get a check-up, do it as soon as possible.

What could be the reason for developmental delay?

Some children are born before date (pre – term), might be sick in the new born period, or could be born with genetic defects. In addition, some children are born with metabolic or neurological disorders, which remain dormant for some time, and developmental delay could be the only sign.

Can developmental delay be prevented?

There are so many different causes that can lead to developmental delay, so there isn't one “right way” to prevent it. What's important is to be aware of when your baby should be reaching developmental milestones and to consult your paediatrician if you think there may be a problem. Early intervention is the key to helping your child overcome any developmental delays.

Children with developmental delay – Will they ever develop?

Just like other children, children with developmental delay keep learning; however, they take longer to develop new skills, and might learn in slightly different ways.

For example, most children can learn skills quickly and by example but, children with developmental delay might need to be shown skills in smaller, simpler steps. They might also need more opportunities to practice.

Will my child ever be normal like other children?

For some people, the delay in their development will be short-term and can be overcome with additional support or therapy. In other cases, the delay may be more significant and the child will need on-going support. This indicates that they may also have a learning disability.

Whom should I approach to get help?

Your paediatrician should be the first person of contact, most of the time; reassurance and close observation is all that is required. However, some children will need assistance from:

- Child Neurologist – expertise in disorders of brain, spine and metabolic conditions.
- Developmental Paediatrician – expertise in assessing child's development and identifying the areas of delay.
- Physiotherapist – who understands and treats disorders of movement.

Are there any other resources that are available?

Please search "Totsguide" in Google Play store and download "Track & Act" free app. It is available in Kannada, Hindi and English. This application is based on data that is validated. It helps you to screen your child using simple questions and identify if there are any areas of concern with your child's development.

Take home message:

- There's no one single cause of developmental delays.
- Early detection and intervention is important to help your child develop skills.

