

Fact Sheet

Developmental Delay



What is developmental delay?

Children develop a wide range of skills in their early years of life. This includes the development of speech and language, motor skills, self help, play and problem solving. Developmental delay is a term used when a child is developing skills more slowly than other children in the same age group. When more than one area of development is affected, the term Global Development Delay may be used.

All children with developmental delay still have the potential to learn and develop. There are many services that can provide assessment and support children with developmental delay.

What are the causes of developmental delay?

There are many things that can affect how a child develops. Some occur during pregnancy and around the time of birth, others occur after the child is born.

Medical conditions that may be associated with development delay include prematurity (born too early), inherited disorders, chronic illness (including epilepsy), infections, problems with hearing and vision. Environmental, dietary and social factors may also contribute. Most of the time, no cause is identified.

What to do?

The earlier a child's developmental delay is identified and supports put in

place, the better the outcome for the child and family.

Parents usually know their child better than any one else. If you have any concerns about your child's development, it is a good idea to get them checked out early.

Your child's personal health record (the Blue Book) has some useful checklists for development at different ages. Use this as a guide and if there are concerns you can talk to your early childhood nurse or your family doctor.

They may recommend testing your child's vision and hearing, or referral to a specialist for developmental assessment and advice. They may also recommend your child starts therapy or intervention, for example:

- speech therapy
- physiotherapy
- occupational therapy
- psychology

Who do I go to for support?

- Your local Early Childhood Health Centre www.health.nsw.gov.au or associated Parent Support Team, which is run by early childhood nurses and can offer advice and support to families with children under the age of 5 years.
- Your family doctor or paediatrician.
- Child Care Centre and pre-school staff.
- Early Childhood Intervention Line (phone 1300 656 865).

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- NSW Family Support Services inc. A peak body that represents over 250 family support services in NSW. They will help you find a suitable service in your local area for vulnerable families. Phone number: 02 9692 9999. www.nswfamilyservices.asn.au
- Parent line – phone: 13 20 55, a 24 hour phone service run by qualified counsellors for parents of children between 0-18 years. Provides advice or information about appropriate referral services.

- Children learn and develop at different rates and in different ways.

Other services that may be useful include:

- Your local residential Family Care services which provide parenting support in early childhood are:
Karitane, 24 hour Helpline: 1300 227 464, www.karitane.com.au.
Tresillian, 24-Hour Parents Help Line: (02) 9787 0855. www.tresillian.net

Remember

- Your concerns are valid and you are your child's best advocate.
- There are support services for you and your child.
- The earlier developmental delay is recognised and supports put in place, the better the outcome for the child.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

This document was reviewed on 2nd October 2009.

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