

Look what I see!

Early development of social skills



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Babies interact with their surroundings as early as in their first year of life by looking, using body language and making sounds. This is how they learn to become part of their community. During the first three years of life, your child will reach important developmental milestones. Many parents know when a baby should be able to sit up on his own or take the first tentative step. The milestones for social development are not as well known, which is why this brochure has been published.

As parents or guardians, you are most familiar with your child. You see them every day and are the closest person to them and observe them in all situations. This brochure is intended to help you make more systematic observations. We suggest that you follow your child's progress and make a note of when your child passes all the different milestones in his or her social development.

Don't panic if your child seems to be a few weeks «late». However, if the weeks turn into months, there might be good reason to act. Don't worry either if there is something that your baby can't do. The most important issue is whether your baby is following a pattern characterized by mastering most of the skills in each age period.

We suggest you write down a few notes in your brochure. It will be enjoyable to look back and read a little booklet containing all those early memories. It will also serve as invaluable information when you are discussing your child's development with the pediatrician or nurse at the well-baby clinic.

Your own observations:

- Does your baby look up at your face with interest when you are prattling just to him or her?
- Does your baby smile back at you when he or she sees you smile?
- Does your baby turn round to find the source of a noise?
- After you have been out of your baby's sight, does he or she stop crying the instant you reappear?
- Does your baby make specific noises when he or she catches sight of a toy or a person?

4 months



- Does your baby look up at you with a smile and an expression to show that he or she recognizes you when you come into the room?
- Does your baby usually prattle and babble when he or she is happy?
- If you call your baby's name and he or she can't see where you are, does your baby turn his/her head in the direction of your voice?
- Does your baby laugh out loud if you play and fool around with him/her?

- Does your baby make eye contact with you at the same time as playing with a toy – without your saying anything first?
- Does your baby give you a toy if you hold out your hand and say «thank you»?
- Does your baby interact with other people by playing sound games and does he or she also answer back by making a sound?
- Does your baby react to your tone of voice and stop what he or she is doing, at least for a short while, if you say «no, no»?

- When you call your baby, does he or she turn towards you and make eye contact on one of the two first times that you call his or her name?
- If you mimic sounds made by your baby, does your baby reproduce those sounds back?
- When your baby wants something, does your baby indicate this to you by pointing at the object?
- Does your baby like playing interactive games such as «peek-a-boo», «patty-cake» or «how big are you?»

6 months

8-10 months

10-14 months



- Does your child use sounds or words together with gestures? (for example by pointing or stretching his hand towards an object)
- Does your child shake his or her head to indicate «no»?
- Can your child say one word in addition to «Mommy» and «Daddy»? A «word» here refers to a sound, or several sounds, which your child always says when he or she is referring to someone or something.
- When you enthusiastically say for example «Where's Teddy?», does he or she then point to the toy even if it is more than a couple of feet away?
- Does your child show you a toy by looking at you and holding a toy up towards you?
- If you ask your child to go into another room and fetch a familiar object, e.g. a ball, will he or she do it?
- Without showing your child first, does he or she point at the right picture when you say: «Show me kitty!» or «Where's the doggie?»
- Does your child play simple «let's pretend» games such as feeding Teddy or listening in the receiver of a toy telephone?

15 months

18 months

Egne observasjoner:



- If you point to a picture of a ball, kitten etc and ask your child «What's this?» does your child answer with the correct name of at least one picture?
- Does your child imitate and/or repeat two-word sentences if you for example, are saying «Mommy eats»?
- Does your child point at toys which are out of his reach and then turn round, looking at you to see if you are paying attention?
- When you look surprised and enthusiastically say: «Goodness me! What's that?» does your child turn his or her face in the same direction as you straight away?
- When your child looks in the mirror and you say «Who's that then?» does your child answer and say «me» or say his or her name?
- When your child is playing with a cuddly toy or a doll, does your child pretend to give it food, change its diaper or that sort of thing?
- When you ask your child to point at their own or at a toy's eyes, nose, etc can he or she point correctly to seven different parts of the body?
- Does your child copy what you have been doing, e.g. wiping up a spilt drink, vacuuming or trying to shave?

24 months

36 months

When to worry?

Children develop skills at different tempos. But if a few months go by and you notice that your child is several months «late» in reaching a particular phase in his development, you ought to talk about your child's development the next time you are at your local **health care center or at your pediatrician or nurse at the well-baby clinic.**

The four points listed below will help you on your way:

1 Be prepared

Bring your list of milestones and your own observations when you are going to see the pediatrician or nurse. Go through your list carefully and point out stages where you feel your child deviates from the norm in terms of expected progress. You can request a referral to a consultant or specialist who is highly experienced in testing children.

2 Express your worries directly

Talking about a child's development, or lack of expected skills, is always an emotional thing. Try to express yourself as clearly and relevantly as you can and link your worries with examples from the various milestones.

Don't give up – even if you feel that no one is listening. Ask them to give their reasons for their assessment of the situation. Don't let yourself be discouraged with comments like «no cause for worry» or «wait and see» if you believe that there really is cause for action.

3 Ask questions

Some doctors are difficult to understand in daily life terms, so ask what they mean if they use terms that you don't understand. If your child has undergone tests, you are entitled to ask what the results show, and what they imply for your child. Ask what the next step will be.

4 Follow up your concern

If you do discover that there is something wrong with your child's development, it is absolutely vital that you are persistent. The earlier you take action, the better the results. Insist on referrals to specialists. This is all about your child.

Where do I turn for help?

Your local well-baby clinic the most important meeting place if you want to discuss your child's development. You will meet pediatrician and nurses there, and some clinics also have specialists on hand, such as physiotherapists and psychologists. Some public health clinics offer courses and theme days, as well as arrange group get-togethers where parents can take part – with or without their children. Ask at you local clinic whether they have anything suitable for you and your child.

If your child seems to need a bit of extra support for optimal development, you can ask your local health clinic for a referral to the School Psychology Services (Pedagogisk Psykologisk Tjeneste). They work to help children get the right help at the right time. They can also assess whether your child needs special learning assistance at preschool and they can advise you on the best way to stimulate your child for optimal development.

It is important that you ask your local health clinic about other specialist services located in your area which could help your child get the best help and support available. If necessary, ask to be referred to a specialist in your local area or county, as there are many that might be able to help. Your local health clinic knows which services are available.

Here is a list of some public services that work with children:

School Psychology Services (Pedagogisk Psykologisk Tjeneste)

Pedagogues and psychologists are most often found here. They are responsible for giving children with special needs the professional confirmation to sustain a child's needs in terms of resources in special education.

Children's Special Needs Services (Barnehabiliteringstjenesten)

This is where children are screened for suspected developmental problems. This will include a medical examination, which can be performed here or at your local hospital. The Children's Special Needs Services in many counties also give advice on schools and child care if your child has special training needs or requires specific support for optimal development.

Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics (Barne- og ungdomspsykiatrisk poliklinikk)

This is where children with various kinds of developmental problems are examined. The centre provides support and assistance to parents to help them stimulate their child and provide optimal and well-adjusted development.

Children's Resource Centre (Ressursenter for barn)

There are children's resource centres in many municipalities in Norway. Pedagogically-trained personnel offer advice to preschool teachers and parents.



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