

GROSS MOTOR DELAY

Early Motor Milestones

Infants and children generally follow a typical pattern of learning new body movement (motor) skills as they grow, and we call each of these new movements a *milestone*. The following list is a general guide for which motor milestones we look for, and the average ages at which they typically develop. It is important to note that these ages may not apply for all infants/children (e.g. premature infants).

- 6-8 months: sitting with support and then independently
- 9-10 months: standing beside furniture, pulling themselves to stand
- 12 months: walks with hands held, walks beside furniture (cruising), may be able to take a few unsupported steps
- 15 months: walking independently
- 18 months: running
- 2 years: walks up and down stairs (with 2 feet per step) without assistance (but may hold hand rail or wall), jumping in place
- 3 years: stands on 1 foot briefly, walks upstairs with 1 foot per step
- 4 years: hops on 1 foot, can walk downstairs with 1 foot per step
- 5+ years: can learn more complex motor skills like skipping, riding a bike, swimming strokes, sport skills, etc.

When to Talk Your Health Care Provider

Normal development of motor milestones and gait requires coordinated development of the muscles, bones, and nervous system. If a child's development of motor milestones or gait is abnormal, it could indicate an issue in one of these systems. If you see any of the following red flags or have other concerns, please speak with your Health Care Provider.

Red Flags for Motor Milestones

- Family history of delayed motor development or muscle disease
- Personal or family history of breech positioning late in pregnancy, development hip dysplasia, or there is an apparent leg length discrepancy
- Child is not following the normal progression for motor skill development
- Not sitting independently by 9 months
- Difficulty in getting up from the floor after age 1
- Not walking by 18 months
- Waddling gait after age 3
- Not jumping or standing on one foot by school age
- School-aged child who is markedly less coordinated than their peers
- Muscles appearing "bulky" (especially calf muscles)
- Loss of motor skills that the child was previously able to do



How to Find a Physiotherapist (PT)

Physiotherapists are movement experts, that are educated in the science of physical function, movement, and mobility of the human body. They use specialized treatment to restore and maintain optimal function of the musculo-skeletal system. They are also very helpful when children are presenting with delays in their motor skill development.

Many Physiotherapists in Alberta are located in private clinics. A referral from your Physician is not generally required, unless it is requested by your insurance provider. In some cases, your child may qualify for Physiotherapy through Alberta Health Services – these PTs work at the Alberta Children’s Hospital/Child Developmental Services. If unsure, please discuss this with your Health Care Provider.

If your child is having a movement problem and you think a Physiotherapist may be helpful, we suggest looking for a certified provider that has a special knowledge and background working with children - their bodies are quite different than adults!

You can find a qualified Physiotherapist from the Physiotherapy Alberta website:

www.physiotherapyalberta.ca

Another provider we commonly recommend is:

Calgary Youth Physiotherapy
www.calgaryyouthphysio.com

North Location – Suite #101, 4616 Valiant Dr NW
Phone 403-289-9883

South Location - Suite #203, 7720 Elbow Dr S.W.
Phone 403-259-8534

You are also encouraged to look at our Gait Concerns handout for information about how gait changes over the few few years of life.