Childhood Skills Checklists: Should we be concerned?

Sam's family is worried. He's 18 months old and lacks many of the skills his older sister had at that age. Grandma is concerned. "Shouldn't he be...," has cropped up in several conversations.

"He's healthy and seems fine otherwise," said the doctor at the last appointment. "Let's see how he's doing at his two-year check."

When a family understands typical developmental milestones, they may feel more comfortable addressing questions about their child's development. The following checklist indicates skills the majority of children can accomplish at specific ages.

When looking at a child's development, the following developmental areas are important to consider:

- Gross and fine motor skills (how the child moves around the home and uses their hands and arms)
- Communication skills (how the child communicates with family members and how well the child understands their communication)
- Social and emotional development (engagement, response to caregivers, coping)
- Cognitive development (thinking, play skills, problem solving)

The checklist beginning on page two is divided into these developmental areas.

Parents should not panic if a child is not doing all the items listed for their age group. Children develop at their own rate, so it is difficult to know exactly when a child will learn a particular skill. This checklist is a general guide.

It is important for a family to take into consideration their own cultural beliefs and practices when using this checklist. For instance, in some cultures, independence in a young child is not important, because members of the family believe it is their responsibility to care for the child's needs. A child from a culture where independence is not valued at an early age may not be feeding or dressing themselves at the same age as a child from another culture or lifestyle.

However, if the child can perform only a few or none of the skills, the family may want to take a closer look at the child's development and speak with their pediatrician, family doctor, or nurse practitioner.

If the child is on an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and already receiving early intervention services, this checklist can also be used by families to guage their child's progress toward completing a goal or outcome and determine the next level skill for their child to complete. Children's developmental skills build on each other, so it is important for a family to understand what foundational skill their child needs to accomplish in order to progress to the next skill level.

Families can use the checklists as a way to mark or highlight areas of specific concern. There is an extra box on page four to write in other information, like how often you see a certain behavior, when it happens, or additional observations and concerns. This information will be helpful to share if you reach out to a doctor or seek a referral.

Additional resources

If you would like to view videos that show typical child development, please go to MN Help Me Grow at
http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/DevelopMilestone/index.html

View PACER's information handout: PHP-c67, "When Concerns Arise: Deciding to make a referral" at
PACER.org/parent/php/PHP-c67.pdf

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By the age of 3 months, a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
☐ Lift head and chest when lying on stomach ☐ Quiet to familiar voice or touch ☐ Move arms and legs easily and vigorously ☐ Smile at people ☐ Show improved head control	☐ Quiet to familiar voice or touch ☐ Smile at people ☐ Enjoy being hugged and cuddled
Talking: Language and communication	**Thinking: Cognitive**
☐ Make cooing sounds ☐ Laugh in response to you ☐ Cry when hungry or uncomfortable ☐ Make gurgling noises	☐ Recognize breast or bottle ☐ Follow movement by turning head ☐ Startle at loud noises

By the age of 6 months a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
☐ Roll over in both directions ☐ Begin to sit with assistance ☐ Support weight on both legs when standing and attempt to bounce ☐ Rock back and forth on hands and knees; may crawl backward before moving forward	☐ Recognize familiar faces and begin to know if someone is a stranger ☐ Point at things ☐ Enjoy playing with others, especially family ☐ Like to look at self in mirror ☐ Respond to other people's emotions and express happiness ☐ Make sounds to express happiness or displeasure
Talking: Language and communication	**Thinking: Cognitive**
☐ Make sounds like "bababa," "dadada," and "mamama" ☐ Understand "no" ☐ Copy gestures such as nodding head for "yes" and shaking head for "no"	☐ Use hands and mouth to explore the world ☐ Transfer objects from hand to hand ☐ Like to look at self in mirror ☐ Look around at things

By the age of 9 months a child can usually:

Moving: Motor

- ☐ Get in and out of sitting position and sits well without support
- ☐ Creep or crawl
- ☐ Pull to stand and remain standing with support
- ☐ Begin to take steps while holding on to furniture (cruising)

Interacting: Social and emotional

- ☐ Show feelings by smiling, crying, and pointing
- ☐ Prefer certain toys
- ☐ Cling to familiar adults
- ☐ Cry when you leave and act shy around strangers
- ☐ Respond to own name

Talking: Language and communication

- ☐ Makes sounds like "bababa," "dadada," and "mamama"
- ☐ Understand "no"
- ☐ Copy gestures such as nodding head for "yes" and shaking head for "no"
- ☐ Point at things

Thinking: Cognitive

- ☐ Watch an object as it falls
- ☐ Look for objects they see someone hide
- ☐ Transfer things smoothly from hand to hand
- ☐ Play peek-a-boo
- ☐ Use thumb and index finger to pick things up
- ☐ Turn pages in a book
- ☐ Put things in mouth

By the age of 12 months a child can usually:

Moving: Motor

- ☐ Pull to stand and walk holding on to furniture
- ☐ Get into sitting position without help
- ☐ Begin to stand alone
- ☐ Begin to take steps alone

Interacting: Social and emotional

- ☐ Prefer certain people and toys
- ☐ Imitate sounds, gestures, or actions for attention
- ☐ Cry when you leave and act shy around strangers
- ☐ Put arm or leg out to help with dressing
- ☐ Enjoy playing games like "peek-a-boo"
- ☐ Show affection with familiar people

Talking: Language and communication

- ☐ Use simple gestures like shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye"
- ☐ Say "mama" and "dada"
- ☐ Try to say words
- ☐ Respond to simple requests such as shaking head when asked, "Are you all done?"

Thinking: Cognitive

- ☐ Put objects in and out of containers
- ☐ Look at the correct picture when it is named
- ☐ Begin to use common objects correctly
- ☐ Follow simple directions
- ☐ Explore things by banging or shaking
- ☐ Poke with index finger

By the age of 2 years a child can usually:

Moving: Motor	Interacting: Social and emotional
☐ Kick a ball forward	☐ Play briefly beside other children, and express excitement when with other children
☐ Throw a ball overhand	☐ Imitate others, especially adults and older children
☐ Walk up and down stairs with support	☐ Show more independence
☐ Stand on tiptoes	☐ Show defiance, such as doing what the child was told not to do
☐ Build tower of four or more blocks	☐ Begin to play with other children
☐ Begin to run	
☐ Climb on and off furniture without help	
☐ Put simple puzzles together	

Talking: Language and communication	Thinking: Cognitive
☐ Use two or three words together	☐ Find things even when hidden under two or more covers
☐ Point to things or pictures in a book when named	☐ Explore how things work by touching them and trying them out
☐ Follow simple directions	☐ Begin to sort shapes and colors
☐ Know names of familiar people and body parts	☐ Follow two-step directions such as, "Pick up your truck and put it on the shelf"
	☐ Play simple pretend or make-believe games
	☐ Repeat sentences and rhymes in familiar books
	☐ Name items pictured in a book such as a dog, cat, car, or baby

Notes (frequency, observations, additional concerns):