

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

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 several areas of development are 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 to children with developmental delay.

By the time a child begins school, the specific areas of development that are still different to other same-aged children are often clearer and more specific descriptions can be given. The delays may be more accurately defined as motor, speech and language, sensory or cognitive (learning) disability.

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 developmental delay include prematurity (born too early), inherited disorders, chronic illness, infections and problems with hearing and vision. Environmental, dietary

and social factors may also contribute. Often, 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 anyone 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 you have concerns, you can talk to your early childhood nurse or your family doctor.

Your nurse or doctor 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 Child and Family Health 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.
- Contact the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) provider in your area phone: 1800 800 110
www.ndis.gov.au
- Early Childhood Intervention Line and the Parent Line provide advice or information about referral services phone: 1300 130 052
- Carer's NSW - phone: 1800 242 636
www.carersnsw.asn.au
- Families NSW provides resources and support for parents in NSW. phone: 1800 789 123
www.families.nsw.gov.au

Other services that may be useful include:

- Family Care services provide parenting support and education for families with children from newborn to 5 years of age:
Karitane Careline : 1300 227 464,
www.karitane.com.au.
Tresillian, Parent Help Line: **1300 272 736**
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 your child.