

Early Signs of Autism & Developmental Milestones

Every child develops at their own pace, but certain social and communication milestones help guide healthy growth. Recognizing early signs of autism allows families to access support and resources sooner, leading to better outcomes. If your child is not meeting the following milestones—or if you have any concerns—talk with your **pediatrician** or a developmental specialist.

Developmental Milestones to Watch For

By 6 months: Most babies begin to smile responsively, make eye contact, and show joy and excitement during interactions. If your baby **does not smile often**, shows **few warm or joyful expressions**, or **doesn't respond with interest** to your voice or face, this may signal a delay in early social engagement.

By 9 months: Babies typically enjoy playful back-and-forth exchanges—sharing smiles, laughter, and expressive sounds. If your child **does not share sounds, smiles, or facial expressions**, or seems **uninterested in your facial cues**, consider discussing this with your pediatrician.

By 12 months: Children often babble, use eye contact, and make gestures like pointing or reaching to communicate needs or share interest. If your child **is not babbling, does not point, reach, or wave**, or **doesn't use gestures** to communicate, it may suggest communication or social delays.

By 16 months: Most toddlers begin using single words, imitating sounds, and responding to simple directions. If your child **is not using words** or **does not try to imitate sounds or simple language**, this may indicate a speech or developmental delay.

By 24 months: Children typically combine two words meaningfully—for example, “want juice” or “go outside.” If your child **does not combine two words on their own** or **mostly repeats words or phrases**, it may signal delayed language development or challenges with expressive communication.

At any age: Children usually continue to build on previously gained skills. If your child **loses speech, babbling, gestures, or social interest** they once had, or **shows less interest in interacting**, it's important to seek medical guidance.

If your child shows any of these signs—or if something doesn't feel quite right—trust your instincts. Speak with your **pediatrician** or family doctor about your concerns. **Early identification and support** can make a lasting difference.



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