

# Growth and Development of Your Child

As your child's first teacher, you will help your child learn to walk, talk, play, count, express feelings, regulate emotions, share, love, and much more. These milestones are best achieved by providing a safe and caring environment for the healthy growth and development of your child.

As a parent or caregiver, you notice many changes as your child grows. Each stage is based on the development of the previous stage. During the earliest years of your child's life, the brain grows and develops at a tremendous rate. Established patterns of thinking and responding become part of the foundation of your child's life. Healthy brain development is best nurtured by

- warm and responsive loving family and caregivers,
- attachment fostered by appropriate physical contact such as hugging, rocking, and cuddling,
- hearing engaging conversation, singing, and rhyming,
- proper nutrition,
- fun playtime in safe surroundings which allow for exploration and learning to occur,
- consistent positive reinforcement,
- good books to share and read,
- music to stimulate rhythm, memories, patterns, and sounds,
- everyday routines that guide meal, nap, and bed times, and
- movement and active play.

“Parents and other regular caregivers in children's lives are “active ingredients” of environmental influence during the early childhood period. Children grow and thrive in the context of close and dependable relationships that provide love and nurturance, security, responsive interaction, and encouragement for exploration.”

*From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*  
Deborah Phillips & Jack Shonkoff, (2000).



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It is important to note that each child grows and develops in their own unique way. Here are some tips to consider as you watch your child grow.



## Infants and Toddlers

1. Provide consistent warm, physical contact such as, hugging, massaging, and skin-to-skin contact. This helps to establish your infant's sense of security and well-being.
2. Be attentive to your baby's cues and respond when they are upset as well as when they are happy. Babies cannot be spoiled.
3. Engage your child in face-to-face talk. Check with your doctor if your baby does not seem to respond to your voice or does not imitate your sounds.
4. Talk, sing, and rhyme while dressing, bathing, and feeding your baby. Use simple phrases and talk in your home language.
5. Spend time on the floor playing with your child every day. Encourage your child to reach for colourful objects of different shapes, sizes, and textures. Touch and Feel books provide great stimulation.
6. Be predictable: establish a pattern for meal, nap, and bed times.

## Preschool Children

1. Help your child to use words to describe emotions and express feelings, like happiness, joy, anger, and fear.
2. Choose quality childcare that is affectionate, responsive, educational, and safe. Visit your childcare provider frequently and share your ideas for positive caregiving.
3. Be encouraging and supportive, with consistent guidelines and appropriate, kind, and respectful discipline.
4. Listen to and answer your child's questions. Ask your child questions to stimulate conversation.
5. Read nursery rhymes, folk tales, and other books with familiar objects and experiences.
6. Offer your child choices, in appropriate situations, to help them develop decision-making processes.
7. Spend one-on-one personal time with your child each day.



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