

Fine motor skills activities for children

BABY DEVELOPMENT ARTICLES

ARTICLE

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Parents can help stimulate their children's physical, mental, emotional, and social development by providing them with a nutrient-rich diet and positive intervention to encourage interaction.

Physical growth and development entails the physical as well as psychomotor skills of the baby.

After a safe pregnancy and childbirth, it is time for one of the most exciting journeys to actually begin. As you witness your bundle of joy transforming into an individual with an independent mind, it's important that you stimulate healthy growth and development in your little angel. Here's how you can do it.

Mums, as soon as your baby is out, another roller coaster ride begins for you--that's called parenting. Your baby soon begins to achieve various development milestones one after the other and apart from enjoying your baby's healthy growth, as a responsible parent, you need to stimulate it as well.

What are the different areas in which babies show growth or development?

Human babies show growth and development in 4 major areas: physical, mental, emotional and social.¹

Physical development:

Physical growth and development entails the physical as well as psychomotor skills of the baby. Here are a few major milestones in this area of growth and development that your baby may achieve during the infancy stage:

- Postural changes are seen in the first 2 months,
- Milk teeth appear at 6 months,
- The baby will be able to sit sometime around the seventh month,
- Crawling starts at the age of 10 months,
- At 13 months, the baby will be able to stand,
- Post the age of 13 months and by the time he or she turns 15 months old, the baby will start walking.

These milestones are mainly achieved in proximodistal manner, which implies that the regular and less complex motor skills are mastered before the finer skills.

Mental/Cognitive development: Mental/Cognitive development:

Mental or Cognitive development in babies basically implies sharpening of various abilities. These include attentiveness, perception, observation, imagination, remembrance, thinking, problem solving, intellectual and linguistic development.²

Developmental theorist, Piaget puts forth that newborns interact with their environment in a reflexive manner where they follow their instinct. Goal-directed behaviour and achieving an understanding of the phenomenon of object permanence are 2 important milestones of cognitive development in infancy.³ Goal directed behaviour is when the baby thinks about what and how a desired result needs to be achieved and taking an action to get it. Meanwhile, objective perception is the ability to understand that things exist even if they are not visible. Here's how babies develop cognitive skills during infancy:

- Babies react to light, sound and temperature.
- Babies can imitate, discriminate and recognise to some extent from the age of 1. Piaget has also spoken about a sensory-motor period where the infant is trying to find physical satisfaction based on sensory experience.
- By the time your baby is 1, he or she will have a vocabulary of 2 or more words.
- The baby can also respond to simple questions or requests.
- The sense of form, shape, size and colour is also achieved.
- Although they can recognise known and unknown people, they fail to understand the difference between fact and fiction.

Emotional Development:

A child's emotional development happens across various stages of human life. However, here are a few important things that occur at the infancy stage:

- Emotions at birth are diffused and gross. Specific feelings like anger, fear and love cannot be shown by a baby.

- According to a scholar called Bridge, at the age of 3 months, babies can differentiate between distress or unpleasant situations and delight or pleasant situations.
- At 18 months, a baby can feel jealousy.
- At 3, a baby can express his or her distress, fear, anger, joy and affection.⁴

Social Development

Social development in a baby refers to acceptable social behaviour that the baby learns as at the time of birth the child is neither social or unsocial.⁵

Smiling and laughing are early social responses and by the time the child is 1 year old, he or she also learns to negatively respond to strangers. At 18 months, toddlers start mingling with playmates and by the time they turn 2, they start obeying and following orders.

Activities to foster a healthy growth and development in your child

Here are a few activities that can foster a healthy growth and development in your baby:

Boosting your baby's motor skills and physical growth:⁶

- Allow your baby to reach for the toys, wiggle, kick, roll on their own, play with others and so on by laying them on clean sheets.
- Laying your baby on the belly will help in building the muscles of arm, back and neck.
- Engaging in games, such as peek-a-boo.
- Taking your baby for assisted walks.
- Encouraging the baby to reach out to toys by holding out attractive rattles, and stuffed animals.
- Once the baby can stand up, encourage them to dance in tiny steps.

Promoting your baby's cognitive development:⁷

- Singing with your baby helps in enhancing memory and identifying words.
- To help your baby correlate sounds in his or her every day environment with objects, practice identifying sounds from noise.

- Help your child read and identifies alphabets and count numbers.
- Practicing shapes and colours will also boost the cognitive skills of your baby.
- Offer your baby the choice in day-to-day activities allowing him or her to choose clothes and accessories, games, toys and so on.
- Asking relevant questions and getting your baby to answer is also helpful in increasing his cognitive skills.
- Take your baby to the outdoors, interesting places where his or her cognitive skills will be stimulated. Stimulate your baby by playing with everyday items, such as asking them to match the lids with the right bottle size and so on.

Emotional development of your baby can be stimulated by the following activities:

Within the first 2 years of age, babies not only learn how to show and express their emotions, but also get an insight into understanding the emotions of others.⁸ Here's how you can allow your child to develop emotionally:⁹

- Provide your baby with the responsive care by understanding his or her needs.
- Encourage your baby's development and growth by positively responding to his or her achievements.
- Affectionate and nurturing behaviour will make your baby feel that he or she is special. Engage in activities like hugging, kissing, touching, holding, comforting, rocking the baby and so on.
- Help your baby feels secure and safe by small gestures like picking him or her when crying or when they throw their arms asking you to pick them up and so on.

Fostering social development in your baby is equally important. Here's how you can do it:¹⁰

- Asking your child to look into the mirror and helping him or her identify themselves.
- Helping your baby identify mother, father and other relations.
- Taking them out and helping them interact with other strangers.
- Allowing them to play with peers.

Mums, with positive intervention, your baby will acquire the much-needed skills for a healthy growth and development.

Getting the right nutrients throughout pregnancy is essential. Wyeth's nutrient supplement, S-26 PROMAMA, helps pregnant mums achieve their nutrient requirements and supports appropriate weight gain.

References:

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