



## What Is Motor or Physical Development?

Children grow and develop rapidly in their first five years across the four main areas of development. These areas are motor (physical), communication and language, cognitive, and social and emotional.

Motor development means the physical growth and strengthening of a child's bones, muscles and ability to move and touch his/her surroundings. A child's motor development falls into two categories: fine motor and gross motor.

Fine motor skills refer to small movements in the hands, wrists, fingers, feet, toes, lips and tongue. Gross motor skills involve motor development of muscles that enable babies to hold up their heads, sit and crawl, and eventually walk, run, jump and skip.

Typical motor skill development follows a predictable sequence. It starts from the inner body, including the head, neck, arms and legs, and then moves to the outer body such as hands, feet, fingers and toes. Motor development is important throughout a child's early life, because physical development is tied to other development areas. For example, if a child is able to crawl or walk (gross motor skills), he/she can more easily explore their physical environment, which affects cognitive development. Social and emotional development progresses when a child can speak, eat and drink (fine motor skills).

Parents and caregivers can help develop a child's motor skills at all ages. Some activities include:

- Placing your baby on his/her tummy, and helping him/her reach for a toy.
- Putting a toy on the couch for your child to stretch toward when he/she starts to stand.
- Encouraging walking with a stroller your little one can push.
- Visiting playgrounds, where your child can climb, swing and slide.

For more information on how to encourage and support a child's development, visit the [Motor Development Milestones page](#).