

## Common Signs of Slow Development

The term "developmental delay" is often used by pediatricians to describe a child who does not seem to be developing or maturing at "normal" rates. There are many reasons that explain a slowly developing nervous system. Some youngsters are born with physical or mental conditions that slow normal growth and development. Other kids acquire medical conditions that impair neurological development. Still others grow up in an environment that offers little stimulation and motivation. Irregardless of the reason, developmental delay is a frequent cause of parental worry. Often, parents are told "he will out grow it," or "she'll catch up. Just give her more love and attention." Yet, parental intuition tells them that something is not right. They know the problem is real.

It is therefore important for parents to trust their instincts and seek help from their child's doctor whenever they are concerned. The difference between a developmentally delayed child and their normal peers widens as the child gets older. Therefore, parents need to act quickly to provide their child with the necessary programs to minimize this gap.

The following Early Warning Signs, supplied by Easter Seals, are some of the more common indications that a problem may exist. If for any reason you suspect that your child may have special needs, seek help immediately. Take a minute to read these Early Warning Signs Many conditions causing a delay in growth and development can be corrected if recognized early.

### **SEEING: IF YOUR CHILD...**

- is often unable to locate and pick up small objects which have been dropped
- frequently rubs eyes or complains that eyes hurt
- has reddened, watering or encrusted eyelids
- holds head in a strained or awkward position after a year of age (tilts head to either side—thrusts head forward or backward) when trying to look at a particular person or object
- sometimes or always crosses one or both eyes

### **TALKING: IF YOUR CHILD...**

- is not laughing or squealing by six months
- isn't letting you know when he or she's happy or upset by ten months
- cannot say "Mama" and "Dada" by age one year
- cannot say the names of a few toys and people by age two
- cannot repeat common rhymes or TV jingles by age three
- is not talking in short sentences by age four
- is not understood by people outside the family by age five

### **PLAYING: IF YOUR CHILD...**

- does not play games such as peek-a-boo, patty cake, waving bye-bye by 15 months
- does not imitate parents doing routine household chores by age two or three
- does not enjoy playing alone with toys, pots and pans, sand, etc. by age three
- has no interest in interacting with other children by age three
- does not play group games such as hide-and-seek, tag-ball, etc. with other children by age four
- does not share and take turns by age five

### **THINKING: IF YOUR CHILD...**

- does not react to his/her own name when called by age one year
- is unable to identify hair, eyes ears, nose and mouth by pointing to them by age five
- does not understand simple stories told or read by age three
- does not give reasonable answers to such questions as "What do you do when you are sleepy?" or "What do you do when you are hungry?" by age four
- does not seem to understand the meanings of the words "today," "tomorrow," "yesterday" by age five

### **HEARING: IF YOUR CHILD...**

- does not turn to face the source of strange sounds or voices by six months of age

- has frequent ear aches or runny ears
- talks in a very loud or very soft voice
- does not respond when you call from another room
- turns the same ear toward a sound he or she wishes to hear

**MOVING: IF YOUR CHILD...**

- uses only one hand to reach at six months
- won't bear weight on legs by nine months
- is unable to sit up without support by age one year
- cannot walk without help by age two
- does not walk up and down steps by age three
- is unable to balance on one foot for a short time by age four
- cannot throw a ball overhand and catch a large ball bounced to him/her by age five

If you suspect that your child may have a problem, talk with your pediatrician or family doctor. Remember, the earlier parents recognize that their child may have a special need and seek professional advice, the greater the chance that the youngster can be helped to overcome the problem.