

FACT SHEET

Developmental Delay

What is a developmental delay?

Children identified as “developmentally delayed” tend to develop at a slower rate than typical children of the same age level. This may be evident in a single area of development or in multiple areas. Developmental delay is a noncategorical label often used by educators and health practitioners who are reluctant to identify preschoolers with a categorical label. Even with typical development, there are age ranges for developmental milestones.

How is it manifested?

Common reasons why a child might be developmentally delayed are:

- premature birth
- hospitalization immediately or soon after birth
- insufficient brain cell development
- damage to brain cells before or during birth (Cerebral Palsy)

It is not uncommon for a developmental delay to co-exist with another disorder, such as:

- behavioural and emotional disorders - inherent or related to physical, sexual or emotional abuse early in life
- sensory impairments – vision or hearing problems
- medical/health conditions – allergies or asthma
- genetic disorders (Down Syndrome)
- Attention Deficit Disorder

Who is affected?

Developmental delay is the most common type of disability among preschool children. It is more common in males compared to females. As chil-

ren move into the school system, many are diagnosed with a more specific disability.

How is it diagnosed or detected?

For typically developing children a paediatrician should screen for delays in their development during regular examinations. This may consist of simple questions about what a child is able to do, or may include a formal screening test

Common characteristics, which may be apparent in a child with a developmental delay, include:

- difficulty with change or transition periods
- difficulty remaining on-task and with task-completion
- difficulty understanding concepts that are abstract, as opposed to concrete
- delays in expressive and/or receptive language development
- problems organizing and/or remembering information
- difficulty during unstructured activities

Additional Resources:

KEEP KIDS HEALTHY – www.keepkidshealthy.com

Keep Kids Healthy is a medical and parenting web site. It is designed as a paediatrician’s guide to your children’s health and safety. It is meant to supplement the information that you receive from your child’s physician, with a special emphasis on better health through preventative care.

CHILD AND FAMILY CANADA – www.cfc-efc.ca

Child & Family Canada is a unique Canadian public education website. Fifty Canadian non-profit organizations have come together under the banner of Child & Family Canada to provide quality, credible resources on children and families on an easy-to-navigate website.

The content contained in this document is for general information purposes. It is not the intention to diagnose or treat a child.