



The importance of physical activity in the first six years of life

Activity Milestones - The First Three Years

Parents usually want to know

Parents and caregivers want to know what movements and physical skills children can do by different ages. The questions “what should my child be able to do by now?” or “when will my child be able to...?” are often asked.

Questions like this cannot be answered with certainty, although information is available about two things:

- ★The average age when children learn to sit, crawl, walk or throw a ball with one hand, and
- ★The normal age range when a skill is developed.

THE NORMAL AGE RANGE is of much greater importance than the average age, since every child will have their own developmental time-table. As long as a child falls into the normal age range for most skills, everything is fine, regardless of how early or late in the normal range the skill appears.

When skills fail to develop by the end of the normal age range, professional help should be sought out. The table on the next page shows a number of important physical skills that are usually seen in the first three years of life. The table indicates:

1. The age by which 25% (one quarter) of children perform the skill reasonably well,
2. The **average** age when the skill appears, and
3. The age that 90% of children can perform the skill.

A parent or caregiver should not worry if a child is unable to do a single skill (or even a couple of skills) until they are beyond the age when 90% of the children can do them. If a child is beyond that 90% mark in most

or all skills, then it is probably wise to bring this to the attention of your health care provider, such as a doctor or nurse, so that appropriate testing of the child can take place.

Key Ideas:

Parents and caregivers should only be concerned, and seek help if the child is very late in all or most skills. Everything else is normal!

As you can see, boys and girls differ as to when they can perform a particular skill, and for every skill there is a very wide range of NORMAL ages at which a skill can first appear. Being early in one skill, or later in another, has NO real meaning. It does not mean that the child is

“advanced” or “slow”, just that his/her body does the skill when the body is ready.

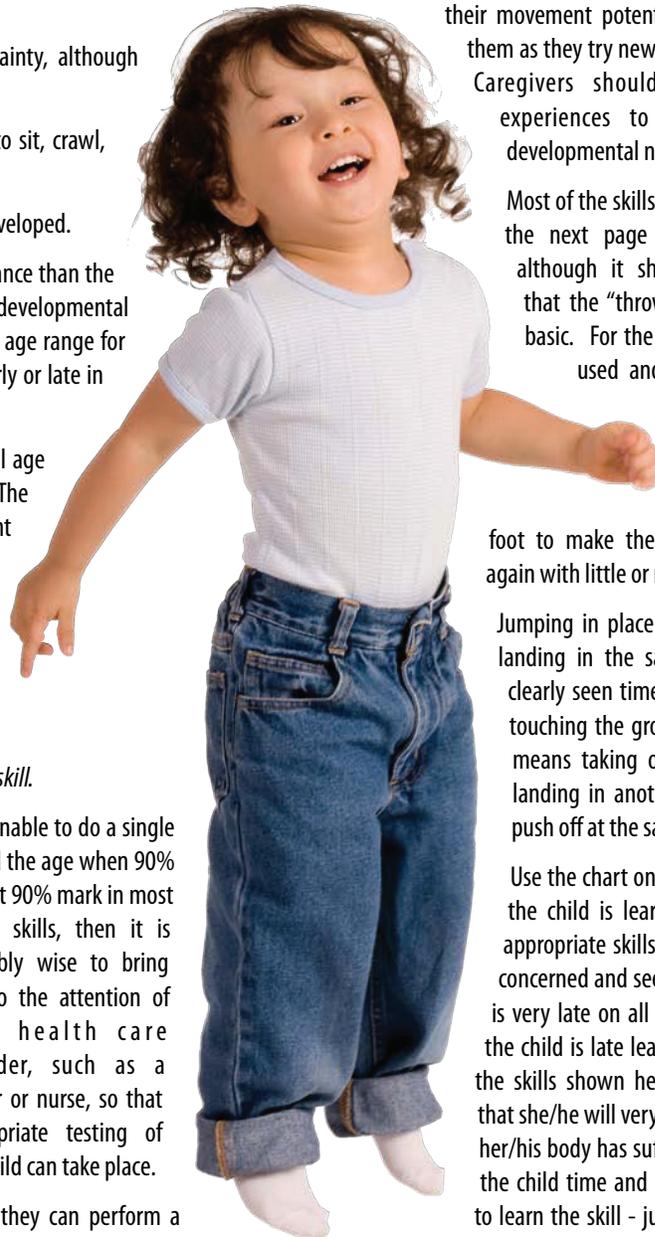
Parents and caregivers have the responsibility to provide a safe and stimulating environment for every child to explore their movement potential, and to encourage them as they try new skills for the first time. Caregivers should tailor the child’s experiences to the child’s unique developmental needs.

Most of the skills shown on the chart on the next page are self explanatory, although it should be remembered that the “throw” and “kick” are very basic. For the throw, only the arm is used and there is virtually no control over where anything goes.

For the kick, it just means using one foot to make the ball move forward - again with little or no control.

Jumping in place means taking off and landing in the same spot, but with a clearly seen time when the child is not touching the ground. The broad jump means taking off from one spot and landing in another using both feet to push off at the same time.

Use the chart on the next page to see if the child is learning the normal age-appropriate skills of early childhood. Be concerned and seek help only if the child is very late on all or most skills. Even if the child is late learning to perform all of the skills shown here, it is quite possible that she/he will very rapidly “catch up” once her/his body has sufficiently matured. Give the child time and don’t pressure her/him to learn the skill - just give her/him lots of opportunity for physical play!

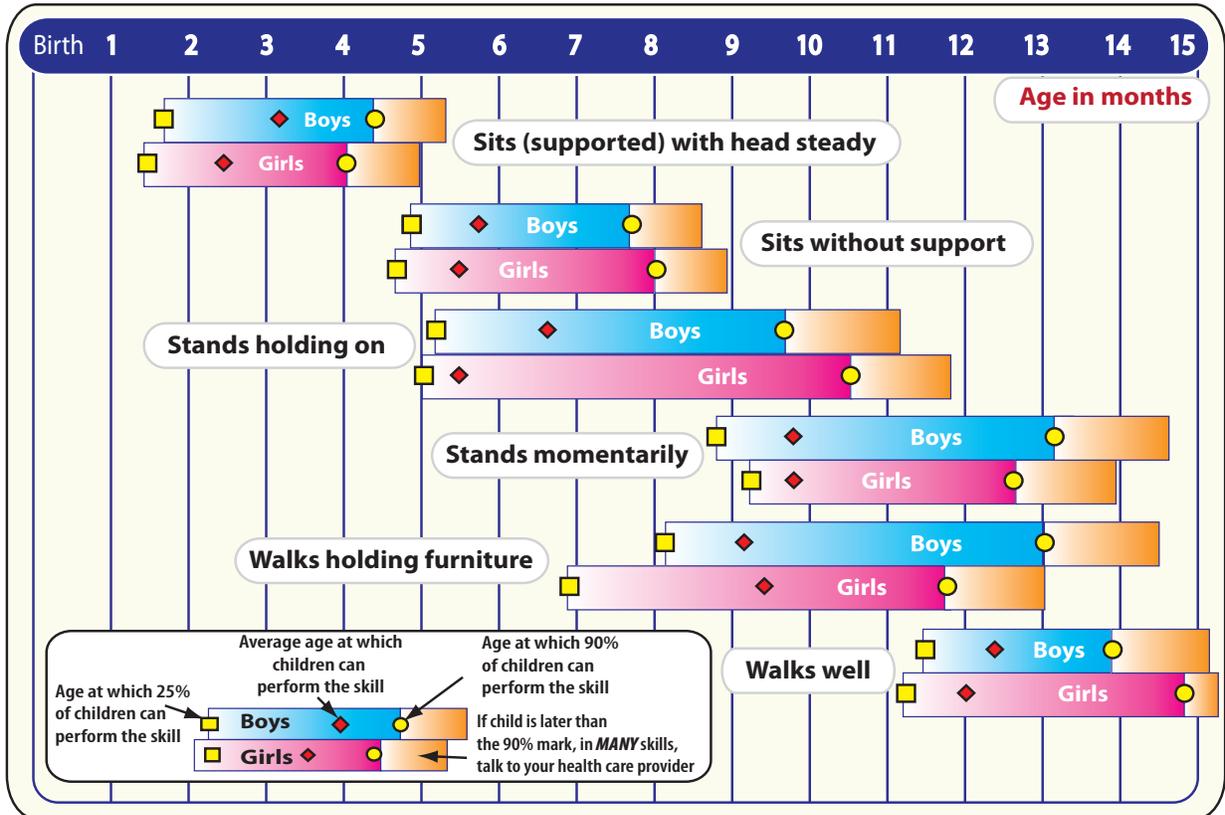


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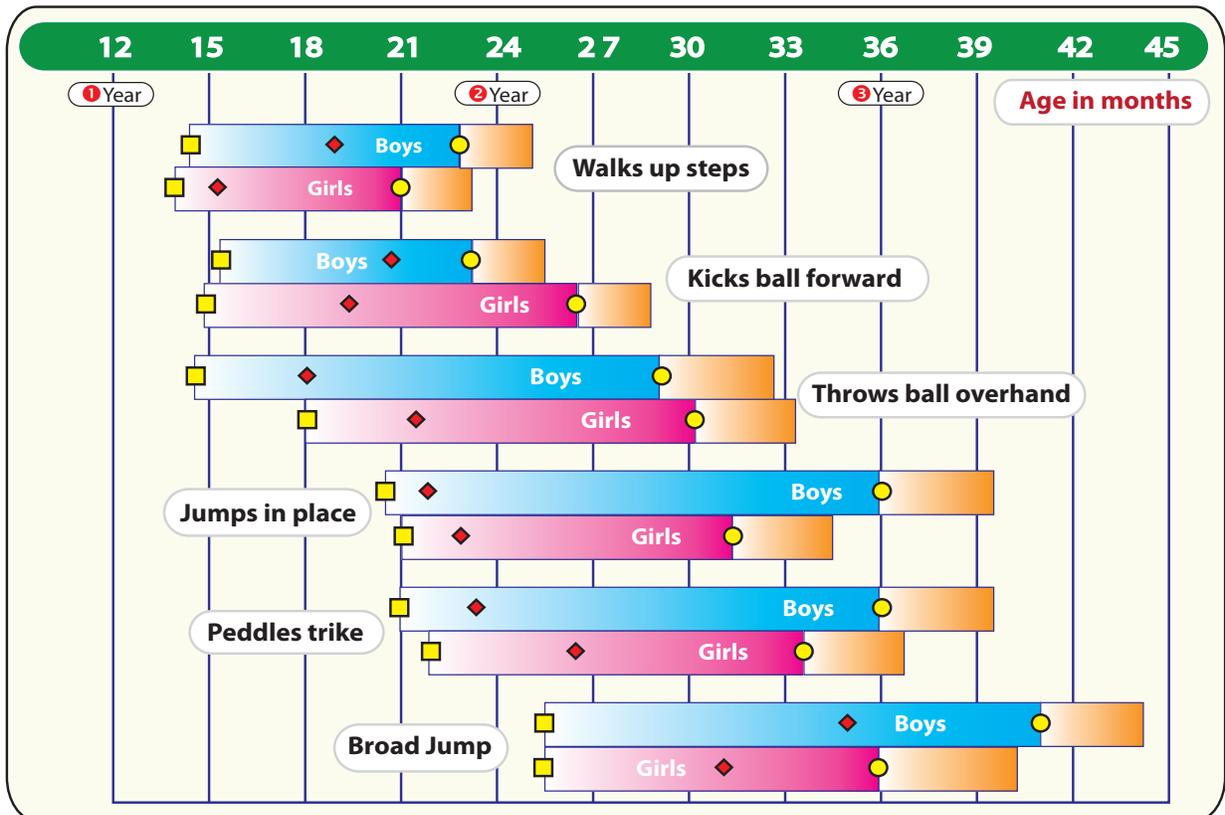
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Movement skill milestones - Birth to 15 months



Movement skill milestones - One year to 4 years



Based on data from: Frankenburg, W.K., Dodds, J.B., Fandal, A.W., Kuzuk, E., & Cohrs, M. (1975). Denver Developmental Screening Test. University of Colorado Medical Centre

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