



# Movement Milestones: Birth to 3 Months

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The first weeks and months of a baby's life are a period of amazing development. New skills and movements form quickly. These movement milestones are often called "motor development" (</English/MotorDelay/Pages/default.aspx>); they are a source of delight for babies and their families.



## Here's an overview of some typical motor milestones to expect from birth to 3 months:

### Month one

Your baby will not be able to control many of her movements during the first few weeks. As she begins to develop more physical abilities, her motions may still be jerky or jittery. But she's learning fast, so hold on!

- **Eyes on you.** Did you know one of the first parts of the body a baby can move are her eyes? Newborns can only see about a foot in front of them at first, but that's just enough to move their eyes to gaze at faces near them. Your baby may also look toward familiar sounds (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Hearing-and-Making-Sounds.aspx>) and voices.
- **Neck control.** Newborns can move their head to the side. You may see this with their first feeding, when the "rooting" reflex (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Newborn-Reflexes.aspx>) prompts them to turn toward the nipple. But infants don't have much neck control the first few weeks. Your baby needs your help to support her head.
- **Newborn reflexes.** In addition to rooting, your baby may show other reflex movements these first weeks. To see the step reflex in action, hold your baby securely under his arms (support his head, too!) as his feet touch a flat surface; he may put one foot in front of the other in a sort of "walking" motion. This reflex disappears after the first couple months, and most babies don't take their first "real" steps until about a year old.

### Month Two

Your baby's nervous system has matured some by now. Certain newborn reflexes are beginning to give way to voluntary motions. With improved muscle control, movement becomes more fluid and wigglier. Here's what else you can expect:

- **Heads up on tummy time.** Most babies this age can lift their head up when lying on their tummies. Regularly giving your baby some "tummy time" (</English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/The-Importance-of-Tummy-Time.aspx>) is a great way to help her build strength in her neck and trunk. Some will cry when placed on their tummies, but usually do better after a few tries. It helps to have something interesting, such as mom's face, in front of them so they have encouragement to lift their head. Although too young to actually crawl, your baby may try or begin to push up from a lying position.
- **Hand to mouth.** During these weeks, your baby may begin to wave his arms around more when excited. Increasingly, his hands will catch his attention. He may spend a lot of time trying to move them in front of him where he can see them. After many tries, he may be able to move them to his mouth. His finger motion is still limited, though, so his hands will likely still be clenched in tight little fists. Sucking on them may become a way for him to soothe himself.

- **A tug of the lips.** You may have already noticed random facial movements, including reflexive smiles, while your baby sleeps. But starting sometime around her sixth week, your baby may flash you her first real smile <sup>Back to Top</sup> (/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Your-Babys-First-Smile.aspx) in a genuine gesture of affection or amusement.

## Month Three

Your baby's arm and leg movements continue to become smoother. The "startle" reflex is probably gone by now. She's becoming stronger and better able to coordinate her motions.

- **Straightening out.** You might notice your baby's whole body now looks more relaxed. His hands will no longer be balled up in fists all the time. In fact, he may entertain himself by carefully opening and shutting them. He'll also enjoy more actively kicking his legs, which are straightening out from their pulled-up newborn position.
- **Ready to roll.** As her kicks continue to become more forceful, she may soon be able to kick herself over from her tummy to back. While most babies can't roll from back to tummy yet, some may begin rolling over at this age. Be careful never to leave your baby alone on furniture where they could roll over.
- **Get a grip.** Babies this age may begin to swipe at objects hanging just out of reach. While a newborn reflex causes babies to wrap their fingers around objects that touch the palm, your baby's grasp may now be more deliberate. She may even be able to hold and shake hand toys.
- **Let's bounce.** When held up and supported in a "standing" position on a surface such as your lap, your baby may discover the joy of bouncing. This is a fun way to play together as your baby begins to hold some of his weight in his legs. It's best to avoid leaving babies in bouncer seats (<http://www.aappublications.org/news/2017/10/17/HealthAlerts101717>) or harnesses. These can actually slow your baby's movement progress because they don't let her practice using her muscles as much.

## When to See Your Pediatrician

Remember, each baby's movements may be a little different. If your baby doesn't master her movements at exactly the same pace others might, it is usually **not** because of any developmental delay (/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Assessing-Developmental-Delays.aspx) or other problem.

It is a good idea to talk with your pediatrician if you notice your baby does any of the following:

- **Stops doing something she used to do.** All babies will have good days and bad days. They may go a few days before repeating a new skill. But, if your baby's development is going backwards or consistently stopped, talk with your pediatrician.
- **Is not using a part or side of the body.** Babies this age normally do not show whether they are left or right handed. If your baby only uses one hand or one side of his body, talk with your pediatrician.
- **Seems too floppy.** Young infants may seem "floppy" until they develop more muscle control. But if your baby seems especially limp or droopy, it could mean she is sick or has an infection.
- **Jitters or shakes too much.** Many newborns have shaky hands or quivery chins, but if their whole bodies are shaking, it could signal a medical problem. Call your pediatrician.

## More information

- AAP Motor Delay Tool (/English/MotorDelay/Pages/default.aspx) - Use this tool to learn more about physical developmental delays in children and when to talk with your pediatrician.
- Learn the Signs. Act Early. (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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