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Developmental milestones record - 3 years

This article describes the skills and growth markers that are relevant to 3-year-olds.

Information

These milestones are typical for children in their third year of life. Always keep in mind that some differences are normal. If you have questions about your child's development, contact your child's health care provider.

Physical and motor milestones for a typical 3-year-old include:

- Gains about 4 to 5 pounds per year (1.8 to 2.25 kilograms)
- Grows about 2 to 3 inches per year (5 to 7.5 centimeters)
- Reaches about half of his or her adult height
- Has improved balance
- Has improved vision (20/30)
- Has all 20 primary teeth
- Needs 11 to 13 hours of sleep a day
- May have daytime control over bowel and bladder functions (may have nighttime control as well)
- Can briefly balance and hop on one foot
- May walk up stairs with alternating feet (without holding the rail)
- Can build a block tower of more than 9 cubes
- Can easily place small objects in a small opening
- Can copy a circle
- Can pedal a tricycle

Sensory, mental, and social milestones include:

- Has a vocabulary of several hundred words
- Speaks in sentences of 3 words
- Counts 3 objects
- Uses plurals and pronouns (he/she)

- Often asks questions
- Can dress self, only needing help with shoelaces, buttons, and other fasteners in awkward places
- Can stay focused for a longer period of time
- Has a longer attention span
- Feeds self easily
- Acts out social encounters through play activities
- Becomes less afraid when separated from mother or caregiver for short periods of time
- Fears imaginary things
- Knows own name, age, and sex (boy/girl)
- Starts to share
- Has some cooperative play (building tower of blocks together)

At age 3, almost all of a child's speech should be understandable.

Temper tantrums are common at this age. Children who have tantrums that often last for more than 15 minutes or that occur more than 3 times a day should be seen by a provider.

Below are ways to encourage a 3-year-old's development include:

- Provide a safe play area and constant supervision.
- Provide the necessary space for physical activity.
- Help your child take part in -- and learn the rules of -- sports and games.
- Limit both the time and content of television and computer viewing.
- Visit local areas of interest.
- Encourage your child to help with small household chores, such as helping set the table or picking up toys.
- Encourage play with other children to help develop social skills.
- Encourage creative play.
- Read together.
- Encourage your child to learn by answering their questions.
- Provide activities related to your child's interests.
- Encourage your child to use words to express feelings (rather than acting out).

Alternative Names

Normal childhood growth milestones - 3 years; Growth milestones for children - 3 years; Childhood growth milestones - 3 years; Well child - 3 years

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