

Parents: A Child's First Teacher

You may not know it, but along with being a parent, you have just become a teacher. And not just any teacher- your child's **first and most important teacher**. What your child experiences in their first five years can have a huge impact on how their brain develops, how they do in school, and their success as an adult. You may feel overwhelmed, and are probably wondering if your child is growing and learning as much as they should.

Starting at birth, children get better at how they play, learn, speak, act, and move. Things like taking a first step, pointing at something interesting, and waving "bye-bye" are called developmental milestones, or things that most kids can do by a certain age. Children develop at their own pace, so some children reach milestones earlier or later than others. As your child's first and most important teacher, you can keep track of his or her development by looking for milestones and completing screenings.

Look for Developmental Milestones: Watch for when your child reaches milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act, and move. By looking for these milestones, you can celebrate your child's development, learn what behaviors and skills you can expect in the future, and find any concerns you might have. Learn more about the milestones at sites like:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/milestones>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/abc/>
- <http://www.marchofdimes.org/baby/developmental-milestones-for-baby.aspx>
- <http://www.actearly.wisc.edu/>

Developmental Screening: Complete special questionnaires that ask questions about your child's development at different ages. A developmental screening looks at all areas of your child's growth and shows if your child is developing like most children of the same age. These screenings can help you recognize early on if your child has any areas of development that may need more attention or support. Developmental screenings are available in most Wisconsin communities. Find out more:

- By talking to your child's doctor,
- By talking to your child's child care provider, or
- By completing a free developmental screening online at <http://www.easterseals.com/mtffc/asq/>
- Track your results at: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/screening_passport.pdf

Note that Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) services are available through the Medicaid program and developmental screening services are available under section 619 and part C of the IDEA.

By learning about child development, keeping track of milestones, and completing screenings, you can be sure that your child gets the services and supports they need- as early as possible- to help them be their best!

Where to turn with a concern

By acting early, and reaching out for support services if you have a concern about your child's development, you will support their best growth. If you have a concern, contact your child's doctor and/or one of these agencies:

Wisconsin First Step, 1-800-642-7837 or www.mch-hotlines.org/wisconsin-first-step

Wisconsin Department of Health Services (if your child is under age 3), www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/birth-to3/contacts/familycountycontacts.asp

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Early Childhood: Child Find (if your child is 3 or older): <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/early-childhood/child-find>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/concerned.html>

Get the app! Track your child's development on your phone, by downloading the "CDC's Milestone Tracker" app