Concerned about your child? – English version

These people may be able to help

Speech
Feeding
Coordination
Teeth
Toilet training
Learning
Behaviour
Sleep

Order code: C5

Parents & Paediatricians together

Contact a Family working with The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

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Is your child having difficulty meeting certain milestones?

It is never too early to seek help or advice.

It can be very difficult to decide whether your child is just slow in developing and will catch up or whether you need to ask for help.

For some children getting help early can make a real difference and there are lots of different people who can help.

You can talk about any worries you have about your child with your family doctor (GP), health visitor or nurse. A doctor or nurse might suggest your child see a paediatrician who will try to identify anything that could be causing your child to have a problem or they might suggest you see a specialist.

If your child is being seen at a hospital or clinic you can always ask the nurse or doctor for their advice.

Local children’s centres can also provide advice and help your child’s development through play and learning experiences. In Scotland these are called family centres or early years centres.

You are given a Personal Child Health Record when your child is born. It can help you decide whether your child is slow in their development. Try to keep it up to date and take it with you when you go to see your doctor or health visitor.

Speech and communication

If compared to other children of their age your child is slow to understand simple words, uses few words, or has difficulty in making certain sounds.

A doctor or health visitor might refer you to:
• an audiologist who works with children who have hearing difficulties and can advise on aids to improve hearing,
• a speech and language therapist who can work with you and your child to develop communication skills. If a child cannot talk they can help them find other ways to communicate.

Any word that appears in bold is described more fully at the end of this document.

Where the word could not be translated from English the trans-literal (phonetic) spelling is given in brackets.

If your child is under five a doctor or health visitor might suggest:
• a pre-school home visiting/service which helps children with early communication and pre school learning skills,
• a nursery or play school/group who have people trained to help your child develop social skills.
If your child has difficulty swallowing, eating, drinking or is reluctant to eat.

Your health visitor can give advice on feeding including breast feeding, bottle feeding and weaning on to solid food.

A doctor or health visitor might refer you to:
- a speech and language therapist who can provide help where there are physical problems with swallowing,
- a dietician who can provide advice on food, diet and nutrition,
- a clinical psychologist who can offer support and advice on how to encourage your child to eat.

If compared to other children of their age your child has difficulty sitting up, walking, handling objects, or using certain parts of their body.

A doctor or health visitor might refer you to:
- a physiotherapist who can advise you and help with exercises to improve your child’s mobility and coordination,
- an occupational therapist to assess your child’s coordination and mobility, provide advice and recommend aids/equipment to help with everyday activities.

As your child grows or their condition changes they might need further help. Do not hesitate to go back and ask for further help.

If your child has difficulty cleaning their teeth or finds visiting the dentist difficult.

A doctor or health visitor or local dentist might suggest you take your child to see:
- a community dentist who has been trained to work with children and has special equipment for working with children with disabilities.

If your child is slow in developing control of their bladder or bowel.

Your health visitor can give advice on toilet training. They might refer you to:
- a continence advisor to give you advice and practical help if your child is incontinent,
- a paediatrician to check for medical reasons why your child might be finding this difficult,
- a clinical psychologist to give advice on how to encourage your child to use the toilet.

If your child requires nappies over the age of 3 the NHS can sometimes help by providing nappies and incontinence equipment. Your health visitor or GP can tell you more about this service.
If your child has problems remembering information, learning early educational skills, or responding to requests.

A doctor or health visitor might refer you to:
- a nursery or play school/group for children under 5 who have people trained to help your child learn new skills,
- a pre-school home visiting/service to help your child with early communication and learning skills, long before they start school.

- a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is a teacher responsible for coordinating any extra support a child needs in England and Wales. In Scotland the home visiting teacher, the child’s class teacher or another member of school staff takes on this role,
- An educational psychologist might observe your child and advise on which teaching or behaviour programmes will be of most benefit.

If your child’s behaviour seriously impacts on family life and his or her ability to learn.

Challenging behaviour can be the result of certain medical conditions. Difficult behaviour can sometimes be resolved using simple strategies. Parents should not feel embarrassed asking for help.

A doctor, health visitor or your child’s school might refer you to:
- a social worker to support you, help you access parenting skills class or find strategies to manage your child’s behaviour,
- an educational psychologist or clinical psychologist for help with managing the problem,
- a paediatrician or psychiatrist for assessment and advice on how best to manage your child’s sleep.

If your child takes a long time going to sleep or wakes frequently during the night.

A child that does not sleep creates exhausted parents yet solutions can sometimes be found:
- a health visitor can suggest strategies to promote a good sleep pattern,
- your doctor might refer you to a paediatrician or psychiatrist who can assess your child’s needs and suggest various treatments or behaviour plans to help your child’s sleep.
Concerned about your child?

Some health visitors have specialist roles such as involvement with children with disabilities.

A nursery or play school /group provides opportunities for pre-school children, usually aged 3-5 to take part in educational and fun activities. Some places have staff specifically trained to work with children with additional needs to stimulate and help their development.

A pediatrician is a doctor who specialises in looking after babies, children and young people. A paediatrician can coordinate and liaise with other agencies involved in the management, care and education of the child and family.

Parenting skills classes are sometimes run locally to help parents improve their relationship with their children and find strategies to deal with common problems faced by parents.

A physiotherapist helps in the management and development of movement skills. There are a number of ways in which children can be helped. These may include exercises to strengthen weak muscles and games to improve coordination and motor skills.
Concerned about your child?

A **speech and language therapist** helps children learn to communicate, either through speech or other methods. They can also help if there are problems with eating, drinking and swallowing.

A **social worker** supports children and families by advising them on practical and financial issues, telling them about local services and sometimes helping to arrange the support they need.

A **pre-school home visiting service** is sometimes available for children with delayed development. In England this is called Portage. A teacher or portage home visitor works alongside parents in the home offering practical help and ideas to assist with the development of play, communication, relationships and learning for young children.

A **psychiatrist** is a doctor who specialises in problems that affect the ways a person thinks, feels or behaves. A child and adolescent psychiatrist specialises in working with children and young people. The psychiatrist might want to meet the whole family before deciding what help is appropriate. They can prescribe medication and might suggest a child be seen by a clinical psychologist.

A **special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)** is responsible for coordinating support for children with special educational needs in England and Wales. This can begin at an early age well before the child starts school and continues while they attend school. In Scotland the pre-school home visiting teacher takes on this role before they start school. Once they attend school either the child’s class teacher or a member of the Additional Support Learning staff is responsible.

**Further information and advice**

If you have a disabled child, Contact a Family can help you access further information and advice, including:

- organisations who provide advice on dealing with communication, continence or behaviour problems
- support groups for specific medical conditions
- advice on your rights and entitlements.

In some areas **local children’s centres** give advice and support on education, health and childcare to children under five and their families. In Scotland these are called family centres or early years centres. By 2010 there should be one in every community.