

Global developmental delay

What is global developmental delay?

The term global development delay, or GDD, is used when a child shows delays in several areas of development, and these delays continue for at least six months. The delays may be in speech, movement, thinking, emotional development or other areas.

Causes

There are many possible causes of global developmental delay. They include:

- being born prematurely
- a genetic condition
- problems in pregnancy or soon after the birth
- problems with seeing, hearing or speaking
- injuries or infections to the brain
- frequent or ongoing illness and hospitalisation
- lack of loving care and attention in the first months of life
- malnutrition.

Symptoms

By the age of one, babies can usually pull themselves up or take a few steps, say words like “mama” and “dada”, follow simple requests, and smile when they see their parents.

By the age of two, children can usually walk well, scribble and understand when told not to do something.

By the age of three, children can usually go up and down stairs, talk in short sentences and show interest in other children.

By the age of five, children can usually skip, hold a crayon, ask simple questions and undress themselves.

If your child isn't meeting these milestones or developing how you'd expect, see your GP or an early childhood nurse. They can help you understand the reasons why and help you work out what to do. The earlier this happens the better for your child to reach their full potential.



At CPA we help babies, children, teenagers and adults living with neurological and physical disabilities lead the most comfortable and independent lives possible. Our therapy teams work with individuals and families in many ways. Get in touch to find out how we can support you and improve your child's development.

Diagnosis

If a child has developmental delay, it can take a while to find out why. A GP will refer the family to a specialist like a paediatrician. The health professionals will take a family and medical history and examine the child. They may order tests, which might include:

- hearing, sound, speech and vision tests
- blood tests
- genetic tests
- scans, ultrasounds and x-rays to check for physical abnormalities
- a psychological assessment.

Sometimes, a clear diagnosis can be reached. Sometimes it can't.

Living with global developmental delay

Talking to doctors about what therapies, services and treatments are available can be very helpful. This can help you understand your child's situation and what treatments might achieve.

Importantly, some global development delays are permanent, while some may improve or correct themselves during childhood. Psychologists, counsellors and social workers can also provide emotional support for parents dealing with what a diagnosis of Global Development Delay might mean for their child.



Interpreters are available to support you through all of your appointments. Interpreters are free of charge from the government and can be included in your NDIS plan.

Treatment and therapy

Ideally, a child will be cared for by a multidisciplinary team that could include:

- a GP and some specialists
- an occupational therapist
- a physiotherapist
- a speech pathologist.

This multidisciplinary team will talk about a child's strengths and weaknesses, and will help develop a plan that covers:

- first point of contact
- regular assessments to check on progress
- some early intervention services.

Get in touch with us:



Call us on 1300 888 378



Email us at ask@cerebralpalsy.org.au



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