

Your child's development from birth to 3 years

Your child's experiences in the early months and years of life will affect their health, well-being and coping skills for the rest of their life. The way you respond to your child can help teach their brain to build and strengthen the connections that will help them feel safe, trust others, be confident and live a healthy life.

The 5 areas of child development

Your child will develop across 5 important areas between birth and 3 years old:

1. **Physical** – how they use their body
2. **Social** – how they interact with others
3. **Emotional** – how they recognize, express and manage their feelings
4. **Cognitive** – how they think and reason
5. **Language** – how they communicate

How your child develops depends on many things, including their genetic makeup, the support they receive and the things they experience.

Support your child's healthy development through "serve and return" interactions

Serve and return interactions help build a solid foundation for your child's brain, build a healthy bond with you and help them grow in all five areas of child development.

What are serve and return interactions?

Imagine a tennis game between a parent or caregiver and a child. Instead of hitting a ball back and forth across a net, they send and get different types of communication, such as touch, sounds, words smiles and eye contact.

How to use serve and return interactions:

- Pay lots of attention to your child and take note of what interests them
- Respond to what your child communicates with warmth, support and enthusiasm
- Talk to your child regularly. Chat about what you're doing, what they see and what gets their attention
- Cuddle or comfort your child when they cry or are upset
- Smile back when your child smiles and make lots of eye contact
- Read, sing songs and play simple games with your child
- Hold them, touch them and cuddle them skin-to-skin

For more information

To learn more about typical child development by age as well as tips on how to support your child's development in each of the 5 areas, visit:

- [Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care](#)
- [Toddler's First Steps: A Best Chance Guide to Parenting Your 6-to-36 Month-Old Child](#)

For more information in the child development series, visit the following resources:

- [HealthLinkBC File #92a Your child and play from birth to 3 years](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #92c Your child's social and emotional development from birth to 3 years](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #92d Toilet learning](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #92e Time for bed](#)

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