Many children with cerebral palsy are diagnosed shortly after birth. Others, however, may go months or even years with no diagnosis. Without a diagnosis, valuable early therapies and treatments are delayed. How is a concerned parent to answer the question “Is my child developing normally?” All children develop at their own pace, but if your child exhibits the symptoms below, you should not hesitate to talk to your doctor.

80% of all disabilities in children are detected by parental concerns.

**BASIC DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS**

**FINE MOTOR SKILLS**

These skills involve the coordination of small muscle movements. They allow a child to hold a spoon or pick up a piece of cereal between thumb and finger.

**SENSORY**

Sensory skills include seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling.

**LANGUAGE**

This skill involves the coordination of small muscle movements in the mouth and tongue to control sounds and produce sounds.

**SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL**

Social and emotional milestones are often harder to pinpoint than signs of physical development. This area emphasizes many skills that increase self-awareness and self-regulation.

**GROSS MOTOR SKILLS**

Gross motor skills enable your baby to achieve major milestones such as head control, sitting, crawling, maybe even starting to walk.

**CEREBRAL PALSY**

Is caused by a problem in the brain that affects a child’s ability to control his or her muscles. Problems in different parts of the brain cause problems in different parts of the body. A child who lacks basic motor skills will have difficulty reaching subsequent milestones without help.

**(IN INFANTS UP TO 12 MONTHS)**

**2 MONTHS AND OLDER**

- Has difficulty controlling head when picked up
- Has stiff legs that cross or “scissor” when picked up
- Has stiff or shaky arms or legs
- Has problems sucking and feeding

**6 MONTHS AND OLDER**

- Continues to exhibit poor head control when picked up
- Has problems eating and drinking
- May reach with only one hand while keeping the other in a fist

**10 MONTHS AND OLDER**

- Grabs by pushing off with one hand and leg while dragging the opposite hand and leg
- Isn’t able to sit by himself or herself
- Doesn’t babble
- Doesn’t respond to own name

**12 MONTHS AND OLDER**

- Doesn’t crawl or attempt to pull himself or herself up
- Isn’t able to stand with support
- Doesn’t search for things that he sees you hide
- Doesn’t say single words like ‘mama’ or ‘dada’

Developmental delays may or may not indicate cerebral palsy. Your child’s doctor can make a proper diagnosis and determine whether or not medical intervention is necessary.

**RESOURCES**

- March of Dimes, Your Growing Baby: www.marchofdimes.com/baby/growing_indepth.html