

Early Signs of Autism:

At 6 months:

- Does not turn head to find sounds (by 4 months)
- Not cooing or babbling
- Not responding to peek-a-boo game.
- Not participating in vocal turn-taking (baby makes a sound, adult makes a sound, and so forth).
- Not making eye contact with parents during interaction.
- Not smiling when parents smile.

At 12 months:

- No attempts to speak.
- No response when name is called. (May appear deaf.)
- Repetitive body motions such as rocking or hand flapping.
- Oversensitivity to textures, smells, sounds.
- Fixation on a single object. (May watch ceiling fans or toys that light up for extended periods of time.)
- Not pointing, waving or grasping. (does not wave bye-bye)
- Indifferent to others.
- Any loss of language.
- Strong resistance to change in routine.

At 24 months:

- Does not initiate two-word phrases (that is, doesn't just echo words).
- Any loss of words or developmental skill.

Check for delays: Is your child developing normally? Babies develop at their own pace, so it is nearly impossible to generalize about developmental milestones. On the other hand, a parent's concerns can lead to early diagnosis of neurological disorders such as autism - and that will hasten intervention and therapy.

Here is a condensed list of signs indicating various developmental delays from the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

By the end of 3 months

- Does not respond to loud noises
- Does not babble
- Does not pay attention to new faces or seems frightened by new faces or surroundings
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills he or she once had
- Does not smile at people
- Has trouble moving one or both eyes in all directions

By the end of 7 months

- Seems stiff, with tight muscles, or floppy, like a rag doll
- Reaches with one hand only
- Refuses to cuddle and shows no affection
- Does not respond to sounds
- Does not roll over (by 5 months)
- Does not babble
- Head flops back when body is pulled to a sitting position
- Does not turn head to find sounds (by 4 months)
- Cannot sit with help (by 6 months)
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills

By the end of 1 year

- Does not crawl
- Says no single words (not even "mama" or "dada")
- Shows no interest in games of peek-a-boo (by 8 months)
- Does not learn to use gestures, such as waving and shaking head
- Cannot stand when supported
- Does not point to objects or pictures
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills

By the end of 2 years

- Cannot walk (by 18 months)
- Fails to develop a heel-toe walking pattern, or walks only on his or her toes
- Does not speak at least 15 words
- Does not imitate actions or words
- Cannot push a wheeled toy
- Does not use two-word sentences
- Does not follow simple instructions
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills

By the end of 3 years

- Poor eye contact
- Frequent falling
- Persistent drooling or unclear speech
- Little interest in other children
- No involvement in "pretend" play
- Limited interest in toys
- Difficulty with stairs
- Cannot build a tower of more than four blocks
- Cannot communicate in short phrases
- Experiences a dramatic loss of skills