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Information For Parents... Pregnancy Through Child's 7th Year

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Every Child Has A Future



Special Needs Edition

Moving Ins And Outs

How parents can help recognize movement differences

A mother's story

"I'm a frustrated mother, I'm afraid. It seems like it happens in many families, but nobody actually listens. I had concerns from the very first week he was born. I noticed something. He was my first child, but my brother had children, and I had been involved with raising them, so I knew... Everybody kept telling me, 'you're just worried because you're a first-time mother.' But in the first week, I knew something was really wrong. Everybody, even my pediatrician, assured me that he was fine." "Finally someone started to listen to me. I found a place that would give him therapy and help him learn the things that he didn't do naturally at the same rate as other children. He was almost months when he finally started therapy.

"Now, my son is stronger and healthier than he ever could have been without regular, early intervention services. Early intervention had a tremendous impact on my son's life. He is able to be an active participant in childhood rather than an onlooker.

"To all new mothers who feel that there might be a delay or other problem with their child's development, I encourage them to have their baby evaluated at the first sign. Don't wait." How to recognize early warning signs of movement problems

Parents have a keen sense about their children. Even first-time mothers, who may feel insecure because they don't have a lot of experience raising children, can often sense if "something is wrong." Your pediatrician, who sees so many children, cannot spend as much time with your child as you do, observing movement and behavior. Trust your instincts.

In addition to your instincts, you may also note the following signs which, when seen consistently, may indicate areas of concern:

- Poor head control after three months
- Stiff or rigid arms or legs

- Pushing away or arching back
- Floppy or limp body posture
- Cannot sit up without support by eight months
- Uses only one side of body, or only the arms to crawl
- Has difficulty drinking from a baby bottle or controlling liquids in the mouth.

In addition to these physical concerns, the following behaviors may be additional warning signs:

- Extreme irritability or crying
- Failure to smile by three months
- Feeding difficulties (including persistent gagging, choking when fed, pushing soft food out of mouth after six months of age)
- Note: Please remember to correct your child's age for pre-maturity.

What to do if you have concerns

If you notice any of these signs, consult a medical professional. Keep a diary of the movements and behaviors that concern you, and share this record with your baby's pediatrician.

If signs of movement differences exist, early intervention is crucial. It allows a child to receive treatment as soon as possible and maximizes the child's potential. Children with physical challenges can lead more independent and productive lives with early detection and appropriate therapy.

Pathways Awareness Foundation is a national non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of early detection, early therapy and inclusion for infants and children with movement differences. The prognosis for children with motor delays and diagnosed cerebral palsy can be positive and optimistic. Early intervention and therapy can make a dramatic difference. For more information and a free brochure about recognizing the signs of movement differences and about early intervention, parents can call Pathways Awareness Foundation at 1-800-955-2445 or log on to www.pathwaysawareness.org. In New York, you can get more information about the early intervention program by calling the "Growing Up Healthy" hotline at 1-800-522-5006 (in New York City, call 1-800-577-BABY). ●