

## Gross Motor Skills: 0-3 years

It's important to remember that children develop at their own pace, so use these as a guide only. If your child is having difficulty with acquiring any of these skills, a physical therapist can help assess any needs your child may have and provide recommendations for how to best support your child's development. Physical Therapists are movement experts. Pediatric Physical Therapists understand development and the unique skills and needs of children.

### 1 month:

- Baby is often in a fetal position
- Parents will observe random limb movement
- Baby requires constant head support if upright
  - When you lay your baby down to sleep on their back, position baby's head turned to one side, then alternate to the other side next time to avoid developing flatness on the back of their head.
  - Introduce Tummy Time against your chest or using props.

### 2 months:

- Baby will begin to lift head while on their tummy
- Baby begins to bring hands to mouth
- Baby will still require head support, but will begin to turn their head on their own
  - Progress Tummy Time duration and level of assistance provided.
  - Hold baby at your shoulder while guarding their head, but let them begin to lift and turn their head.

### 3 months:

- Baby will fully lift their head when laying on their tummy
- Baby will grasp a rattle placed in their hand
- Baby should begin bringing their hands to midline
  - To extend Tummy Time, use visually attractive toys or a mirror to help keep your child engaged.
  - If your child resists Tummy Time, don't give up - try changing it up (smaller increments, provide extra support, modify position such as on your legs or "superman" hold).
  - Use toys or teethingers to encourage baby to bring hands together at their chest.
  - Help position baby to lay on their side to promote getting their hands together.

**4 months:**

- Starts to reach for their legs while laying on their back
- Pushes up on forearms and turns head side to side while on belly
- Brings hands to mouth; together over midline of the body
- Baby shifts their weight side to side on tummy and may even roll to their back
- Starts to sit with arms propped
  - Research recommends 60 to 90 minutes of Tummy Time per day.
  - Bring knees to chest during diaper changes to engage baby to reach for their legs.
  - To practice rolling from belly to back: tuck arm, turn head, and assist at hips to complete roll.
  - Place a Boppy pillow in front of their belly so they can lean forward on their forearms for practice propped sitting.

**5 months:**

- When on their back, will raise legs and grab their feet
- May start to roll from back to sides
- Rolls from belly to back over each side
- Pushing up more on arms when on their tummy
- Starts to sit with hands on floor for stability
  - Help baby grab their feet during diaper changes.
  - Practice slow motion rolling from back to belly by bringing their leg across body.
  - Help baby progress with propped sitting by having baby sit with arms straight and hands on floor.

**6 months:**

- Reaches for toys on back and on belly
- Rolls from back to belly over each side
- Baby starts to sit more independently with hands free
  - While on their back, have baby reach across midline while visually tracking toy to get them to turn their head and promote rolling.
  - While sitting, have baby visually track an object by moving it side to side.

**7 months:**

- Consistently rolls both ways
- During Tummy Time, baby pushes up on hands with arms straight (may scoot backward) and starts to pivot to the sides
- Sits without support
  - During Tummy Time, slowly move toy out of reach to promote inching forward or pivoting.
  - While sitting, have baby play with a small toy to promote hands free sitting.

**8 months:**

- Active on belly – pivoting and may army crawl
- Catches themselves if they lose their balance in sitting
  - To promote army crawling, place toy forward slightly out of reach, press your hand against the bottom of baby's feet.
  - While sitting, place toys slightly off to the sides to encourage baby to lean, reach across midline, and prop hands to the side.

**9 months:**

- Gets down from sitting to the floor with control
- Pushes up on hands and knees and rocks forward and back
- Stand with hands on supportive surface
  - From sitting, place toy off to the side slightly out of reach to promote transition down to floor.
  - Position child on hands and knees to play, reach, rock forward and backward.

**10 months:**

- Pushes up to sitting
- Crawl on hands and knees
- Pull to stand on stable objects
  - Play with child laying on side and promote pushing up with arms into sitting with guidance at hips.
  - Place toys on raised surface to promote playing on knees and pulling to stand.

**11 months:**

- Crawls over objects such as adult's legs
- Pulls to stand on many objects (even less stable ones)
- Cruises along furniture
- Walks with push toy and with both hands held
  - While child is standing at couch, move toys along seat to promote reaching and stepping to each side.
  - Hold push toy with child so you can move it forward at a slow pace.
  - Have child walk with both hands held.

**12 months:**

- Crawls up steps (with close supervision)
- Stands without holding on for 10 seconds
- Walks with one hand held
- Takes 5 steps independently
  - Support child in standing to reach for toys to improve standing balance.
  - Try placing child in standing with their back against the couch to encourage standing with hands free, then motivate them to take a step forward to you.
  - Encourage child to step from one piece of furniture to another to get toy or from one parent to another.
  - Practice walking with fading support (start with both hands held then let go of one hand).

**13-14 months:**

- Stands up from the floor without support
- Stands independently for longer durations
- Walks independently 10 feet
- Squats to pick up an object and return to standing
  - Practice pushing into standing using a low surface (hands on box, plant feet to be in a squat position, guide child to standing).
  - To encourage child to walk longer distances, slowly back away from them as they are practicing walking to you.
  - Place toys on floor while child is holding onto furniture to practice squatting.

**15-18 months:**

- More coordinated walking, and may walk fast
- Creeps down stairs
- Starting to walk up stairs with support (hands held or wall/railing)
- Climbs on and off furniture
- Lifts foot to kick a ball
- Plays in a squat position
  - For practice coming down the stairs, position the child with their belly against the steps then guide knee down to the step below to promote creeping down backwards safely.
  - Encourage child to walk on different surfaces (grass, slopes, ramps, play mat, uneven terrain, up and down curb, etc.).
  - To climb off furniture safely, assist child onto belly and slide feet down first.
  - Place stationary toys on floor to have child practice staying in a squat position.

**19-24 months:**

- Carries object while walking
- Jumps in place (both feet off the ground) and may start to jump forward
- Walks up and down stairs with hand or rail to hold, both feet per step
- Throws small ball while standing
- Swings foot forward to kick a ball
  - Have child carry a large, soft object across floor (large stuffed animal or pillow).
  - For jumping, support child at trunk or hands to have them practice bouncing motion. Progress to having them grip onto the arm of the couch to practice.
  - When assisting child up the stairs, adult should position themselves beside and slightly behind child. Avoid having child lean back when taking steps up. When practicing going downstairs, have adult step backwards while positioned one step lower and in front of child.
  - Have child practice throwing and kicking a ball to a target such as a laundry basket.

**25-30 months:**

- Walks and runs fairly well, avoiding obstacles
- Starts to alternate feet (one foot on each step) when walking up and possibly down the stairs
- Fully swings leg to kick a ball with either foot
- Jumps higher and farther
- Pushes and pulls large toys, and learning to steer around obstacles
  - Practice stepping over hurdles such as brooms, adults' extended legs, in/out of boxes, etc.
  - Have a child kick a stationary ball to target then progress to have them kick a rolling ball.
  - Help child practice jumping off a low height.
  - Have child get on/off ride toys and navigate around obstacles.

**31-36 months:**

- Jumps forward 24 inches, jumps over 2-inch high hurdle
- Walks along a 4-inch-wide line or balance beam
- Stands on one foot for 3 seconds
- Starts to pedal a tricycle
- Catches a large ball
  - Set up obstacle course activities around the house (e.g. balance beam, up/down step stool, jumping from one pillow to another).
  - To work on balancing on 1 foot, have child use their foot to close the lids of a pop-up toy.
  - To learn to pedal a tricycle, start by pushing them slowly so that they can learn to keep their feet on the pedals.