PARENT GUIDE

Baby Motor Milestones Month by Month (Birth to 3 Years)

A full chart of baby motor milestones from birth to 3 years: when babies hold their head, roll, sit, crawl, stand and walk, and the warning signs that need a hip, foot or nerve check.

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Quick answer: Short chart: steady head control 3-4 months, rolling 4-6 months, sitting unsupported 6-9 months, crawling 7-10 months, pulling to stand 8-11 months, walking alone 12-15 months (normal up to 18), running 18-24 months, stairs and two-footed jumping 2-3 years. See a doctor if your baby is not sitting by 9 months, not walking by 18 months, loses a skill, or clearly favours one side of the body.

Milestone chart

Age (months)	Expected skill
0–1	Lifts head briefly on tummy
2	Head up 45°, follows faces
3–4	Steady head, props on forearms
4–6	Rolling over
6–9	Sitting unsupported
7–10	Crawling
8–11	Pulling to stand, cruising
12–15	Walking alone (normal to 18)
18–24	Running, stairs holding a hand
24–36	Two-footed jump, alternating stairs

Milestones in pictures



Sitting 6-9 mo



Crawling 7-10 mo



Cruising 8-11 mo



Walking 12-18 mo

Every parent asks: is my baby developing normally? Motor milestones are not exact dates but wide windows. In the WHO study of healthy children from six countries, babies sat without support between 4 and 9 months and walked alone between 8 and 18 months [1]. This guide brings every milestone into one chart and explains what is normal and what needs a check. As a paediatric orthopaedic consultant, I focus on signs that may point to a hip, foot, muscle or nerve problem, because finding them early changes the outcome.

Full Motor Milestone Chart from Birth to 3 Years

- Month 1: lifts head briefly on tummy, moves arms and legs equally.
- Month 2: lifts head 45 degrees on tummy, follows faces.
- 3-4 months: steady head when held, props on forearms, brings hands together.
- 4-6 months: rolls tummy-to-back then back-to-tummy, bears weight on legs when held standing.
- 6-9 months: sits unsupported, passes toys between hands.
- 7-10 months: crawls (some babies bottom-shuffle or skip crawling, which is normal if other milestones are fine).
- 8-11 months: pulls to stand and cruises along furniture.
- 12-15 months: first independent steps; walking up to 18 months is within normal.
- 18-24 months: runs, climbs stairs holding a hand, kicks a ball.
- 2 years: runs steadily, goes up and down stairs holding the rail.
- 2.5-3 years: jumps with both feet, climbs stairs alternating feet, balances briefly on one leg.

When Is a Delay a Sign of a Bone or Joint Problem?

Most mild delay is normal, but some signs need a paediatric orthopaedic check:

- Developmental hip dislocation (DDH): uneven thigh creases, one leg looking shorter, difficulty opening one thigh at nappy change, or a limp when walking starts. Detection in the first months means simple harness treatment [2].
- Clubfoot and congenital deformities: found at birth and treated early so walking is not delayed.
- Toe walking after age two, especially on one side.
- Severe or uneven bow legs after age two, or with short stature (possible rickets).
- Muscle weakness (such as muscular dystrophy): difficulty getting up from the floor or climbing stairs in boys, and walking after 18 months [3].
- Cerebral palsy: stiff limbs, using one side, or several milestones delayed together [4].

Premature Babies: How Do I Calculate Corrected Age?

Subtract the number of weeks your baby was born early from their actual age. Example: a baby born at 32 weeks (8 weeks early) who is now 8 months old has a corrected age of 6 months and is compared with 6-month milestones. Corrected age is used until about age two [5].

Common Mistakes That Hold Babies Back

- Baby walkers: reduce floor play, do not speed walking and are linked to stair-fall injuries; medical societies advise against them [6].
- Forcing standing or walking before the baby is ready: usually not harmful to the hips but does not speed development.
- Too little tummy time: back sleeping is essential for safety, but awake tummy play builds neck and shoulder strength.
- Tight swaddling with legs pulled straight: raises the risk of hip dislocation; leave legs bent and apart inside the swaddle.
- Long periods of W-sitting: vary the child's sitting positions.
- Medical shoes for a child who walks normally: flexible flat feet are normal in toddlers and need no special shoes.

Warning signs – see a doctor

- No steady head control by 4 months
- Not sitting unsupported by 9 months
- Not pulling to stand by 12 months
- Not walking alone by 18 months
- Clear preference for one hand or leg before age one
- A limp, unequal leg length or uneven thigh creases
- Marked stiffness or floppiness
- Losing a motor skill already learned

What helps your baby

- Daily tummy time from the first weeks, while awake and supervised
- Floor play rather than long periods in bouncers and walkers
- No baby walkers: they do not speed walking and increase falls and injuries
- Use corrected age for premature babies until age two
- Hip ultrasound for at-risk babies in the first months
- Orthopaedic or neurological assessment when warning signs appear
- Physiotherapy when motor delay is confirmed

Common parent questions

When do babies hold their head up?

Briefly from month one on the tummy, and steadily when held by 3-4 months. If the head still flops at 4-5 months, see a doctor.

When do babies roll over?

Usually between 4 and 6 months, starting tummy-to-back. Some roll a little later if they had little tummy time.

My baby is 8 months and not sitting alone – is that normal?

It is still within normal up to 9 months. If not sitting by 9 months, or very floppy or stiff, an assessment is needed.

Must a baby crawl before walking?

No. Some bottom-shuffle or go straight to standing, which is normal if other milestones are fine. Bottom-shufflers may walk a little later.

When should parents worry if a child is not walking?

Walking up to 18 months is normal. After that we examine hips, muscles and nerves – sooner if there is a limp or leg-length difference.

Do baby walkers help babies walk sooner?

No. Studies have not found they speed walking, and they are a known cause of fall injuries, so we advise against them [6].

Does late walking mean hip dislocation?

Not necessarily; hip dislocation often does not delay walking but shows as a limp or waddle. Any limp when walking starts needs a hip check.

My premature baby is behind peers – should I worry?

Compare with corrected age, not actual age. If behind even for corrected age, we assess.

When should I see a paediatric orthopaedic surgeon rather than a paediatrician?

When there is a hip, foot or leg sign: uneven creases, limp, twisted foot, toe walking or severe bowing.

Global delay across several milestones usually starts with a paediatrician or paediatric neurologist.

References

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This guide is for education and does not replace a medical examination.