General Development Stages

The following age-specific highlights of motor control and psychosocial development are meant to guide you to recognize the average. Not all children develop according to the average. Illness also may delay a child’s development in these areas. Please discuss any concerns with your hospice team.

**INFANT: BIRTH TO 3 MONTHS**

**Motor Control**
- Can grasp
- Turns head when cheek is touched
- Shows strong suck or gag reflex
- May lift head, but unsteady
- Stares at faces, objects
- Hand often goes to mouth
- Responds to sounds by turning head or looking startled
- Can lift head when on stomach
- Rolls from stomach to back

**Psychosocial Development**
- Develops trust in first year, may develop mistrust if basic needs unmet or lacking
- Enjoys being held, cuddled, touched, talked to
- Responds with smile to familiar faces
- May gurgle in response to human voice
- Begins to develop relationship with primary caregiver
- Communicates through crying and gestures
- Sucks finger to soothe self
- Explores through taste and touch

**INFANT: 3 TO 6 MONTHS**

**Motor Control**
- Reaches for objects
- Turns objects with fingers
- Passes objects from hand-to-hand
- Holds head steady
- Rolls over completely
- Bears weight on legs
- Sits with support

**Psychosocial Development**
- May smile in response to stimulation or human face
- Coos and gurgles when talked to
- Laughs aloud
- Responds to and enjoys interaction with others
- Enjoys free motor play and large soft toys

**INFANT: 6 TO 9 MONTHS**

**Motor Control**
- Sits alone steadily
- May suck thumb
- Holds own bottle
- Bangs or throws objects
- May crawl or creep

**Psychosocial Development**
- May begin to show fear and separation anxiety
- Can make sounds and imitate some gestures
- Likes hearing sounds they make repeated back to them
- Turns head when sound is heard
- Can show excitement
INFANT: 9 TO 12 MONTHS

**Motor Control**
- Grasps with thumb and forefinger
- Pulls self upright to stand
- Has some sense of balance and may stand alone momentarily
- Cruises (walks while holding onto furniture or hands of adult)
- Crawls, creeps
- Begins to climb
- Opens cupboards, drawers
- Learns to feed self

**Psychosocial Development**
- Responds to own name
- Initiates communication by reaching out arms to be picked up
- Follows simple directions
- Shows fear of strange objects and strange voices
- Imitates definite speech sounds and facial expressions
- Begins to communicate by pointing to desired object
- Recognizes the meaning of “no-no”

TODDLER: 1 TO 2 YEARS

**Motor Control**
- Walks without holding on
- Runs within a few weeks of walking (awkwardly, same initial walking)
- Goes from sitting to standing without using hands (15 months); kneels without support
- Climbs in adult chair and turns around to sit
- Backs into child’s chair to sit
- Pulls and pushes toys while walking
- Bends without losing balance
- Climbs stairs on knees, goes down by scooting on buttocks
- Throws and drops toys for another to retrieve
- Removes shoes and socks
- Feeds self
- Puts objects in ears, nose

**Psychosocial Development**
- Tolerates separation from the primary caregiver
- Beginning to potty train
- Uses words to communicate with others
- Becomes less dependent on the primary caregiver
- Remains unaware of dangers to self and others
- Knows 3–20 words
- Recognizes objects
- Has increased periods of play activity
- Responds to simple commands
- Shows emotions such as jealousy, frustration, anger, affection
- May throw temper tantrums
- May have favorite security/comfort object

PRESCHOOLER: 3 TO 5 YEARS

**Motor Control**
- Increased muscle coordination
- Potty training complete
- Dresses self
- Walks on tiptoes
- Stands on one foot
- Throws objects overhead
- Pours liquid from pitcher
- Puts on shoes

**Psychosocial Development**
- Shows vigorous, intensive behavior and strong imagination
- Learns to depend on own initiative for action
- May undertake goals or activities that conflict with those of parents or others
- Language development (adds 1000 words to vocabulary)
- Imitates adult behaviors
- Very curious, asks “why?”
- Can tolerate periods of separation from parents
- Can communicate and understand others
### PRESCHOOLER: 3 TO 5 YEARS

#### Psychosocial Development CONTINUED

- Performs self-care activities (e.g., washes hands, brushes teeth)
- Learning right from wrong
- Develops sexual awareness and modesty
- Plays with peers; may develop “imaginary friends”
- Knows first and last name
- Speaks in 4–6-word sentences, speech 50–75% intelligible
- Begins to tell stories about pictures
- Needs predictability, relies on rituals and routines
- Has vague concept of time

### YOUNGER SCHOOL AGE: 5 TO 9 YEARS

#### Motor Control

- Neuromuscular skills refined
- Climbs, hops and gallops well; has improved balance
- Can throw and catch
- May learn to tie shoes
- Wants to do tasks and activities through to completion for feeling of achievement
- Starts to develop the social and physical skills needed for playing games
- Learns to get along with others of the same age
- Starts to develop a conscience and morals
- Starts to develop good feelings and attitude about oneself
- School is a large part of their life
- Can reason and understand cause and effect

#### Psychosocial Development

- Assumes responsibility for jobs around the house
- Engages in competitive sports and outdoor activities
- Seeks independence from adults and learns to depend on oneself
- Develops and keeps friendships with peers
- Develops moral and ethical behavior

### OLDER SCHOOL AGE: 9 TO 12 YEARS

#### Motor Control

- Physical skills and capabilities continue to develop
- May experience coordination problem due to rapid growth spurts
- Accepts the changes in the body and appearance, has intense concern over physical appearance
- Develops appropriate relationships with males and females of the same age
- Interested in peers of both sexes
- Accepts the male or female role appropriate for own age
- Becomes independent from parents and adults
- Develops morals, attitudes and values needed for functioning in society
- Trust is very important
- May shift between mature and child-like behaviors and show mood swings

#### Psychosocial Development

- Development of identity is shaped by rapid and marked physical changes
- May struggle to fit into roles or to integrate their values and concepts with those of society
- Physical skills and capabilities continue to develop
- May experience coordination problem due to growth spurts

### ADOLESCENT: 12 TO 18 YEARS

#### Motor Control

- Physical skills and capabilities continue to develop
- May experience coordination problem due to growth spurts
- Accepts the changes in the body and appearance, has intense concern over physical appearance
- Develops appropriate relationships with males and females of the same age
- Interested in peers of both sexes
- Accepts the male or female role appropriate for own age
- Becomes independent from parents and adults
- Develops morals, attitudes and values needed for functioning in society
- Trust is very important
- May shift between mature and child-like behaviors and show mood swings