

The child also may not:

- respond to his or her name or to other people
- approach adults to show them things they are interested in
- use eye contact in social interaction or to get someone's attention

Communicating

- No babbling by 12 months.
- No back-and-forth gestures by 12 months, like pointing, showing, reaching, or waving.
- No words by 16 months.
- No two word meaningful phrases (without imitating or repeating) by 24 months (e.g., “more juice” or “mommy eat”).
- Some have limited language and may repeat words or phrases.
- Those with more advanced language do not use it for social conversation and it may be limited to a few topics.

|| **Any** loss of speech or babbling or social skills by any age is a **big** warning sign.

What should I do if I have concerns?

Parents will often see the early signs of PDD before their child is 2 years old. Tell your doctor about your concerns. Because there are no medical tests for PDD, diagnosis is made by watching a child's behaviour.

A referral to a pediatrician or another health professional is needed to be sure of the diagnosis.

What do children with PDD need?

- Early diagnosis is very important so that children can be treated as soon as possible.
- Intensive treatment, started as early as possible, will bring about the most improvement for children with these disorders.
- Even children with specific language delays or general developmental delays, will still benefit from early diagnosis and intervention.

For children with PDD, treatment programs offer:

- learning activities to teach communication, social and play skills
- professional help with the child's behaviour, both at home and in the treatment program. This can help reduce problems and help families cope with everyday stresses.

If you have questions or concerns, please call Access Mental Health at 403-943-1500 or your family doctor.

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.

health information

Communication and Socialization: What should I be concerned about?



Language development is one area that parents watch closely, with speech delay being one of the most common early concerns.

What is normal language development?

*By 3 years of age, a child is usually able to:

- say 3–4 words sentences
- use more of the little words (is, a, the)
- follow three-part directions, like “Go to your room, get your socks, and bring them to me.”
- understand and ask questions, like “Where is your coat?”, “Who’s that?”, and “What is soap for?”
- describe activities, feelings, and problems
- tell simple stories

**From Talk Box*

A child’s ability to communicate through words and gestures is also closely linked to his social development. From birth, children are developing social relationships with family members. They cuddle and smile, learn to send clear signals, share attention, take turns with sounds and gestures, and engage socially with others.

What is normal social development?

By 3 years of age, a child is usually able to:

- smile at others and waves, respond to her name
- play games with adults (like pat-a-cake)
- copy adults in play
- try to get adult attention (“Watch me.”)

- show others or point to interesting items
- use pretend play, like feeding a doll, cooking
- play different characters with you, talk for dolls or action figures
- watch and play near other children
- take part in simple group activities

When is there a problem?

Children who use eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures to communicate but are slow to use words, may have a:

- language delay
- general delay in development
- hearing loss

Children may have a developmental disorder of communication and socialization if they:

- are slow to talk
- do not use eye contact
- do not use facial expressions
- do not use gestures

and show behaviours that are very different from other children their age, like:

- strong fascination with certain things
- play repeatedly with the same toys
- lack imaginative play
- odd motor behaviour, like rocking and hand waving
- resist even small changes to their routines

What are disorders of communication and socialization?

There is a range of disorders of communication and socialization called Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD). All children with PDD have:

- trouble relating to other people
- communication problems
- unusual play or repetitive interests and behaviours

The two most common forms of PDD are autism and Asperger’s disorder. Because there is a wide variety of symptoms and severity the disorders can all look different.

What are early signs that a child might have PDD ?

Sometimes a child does not show the expected development for his or her age. Even before 3 years of age, there may be some warning signs that there are problems with communication and social development.

Interacting with Others

- May not show affection or be uncomfortable with physical contact.
- No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by 6 months.
- No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions by 9 months.
- May withdraw from others and prefer to play on his or her own.