

Children's Health Medical Center Dallas

Children's Health Scholarly Collection

Resources

Recommended Trainings and Resources

2021

Caring for Substance-Exposed Infants: Development

The Rees-Jones Center for Foster Care Excellence

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Caring for Substance-exposed Infants-Development

Substance-exposed babies may have some of the following developmental challenges. Please talk to your medical provider if you have any questions.

Motor Development Delays

- Muscles stiff or floppy
- Delays in reaching milestones such as rolling over, sitting, walking, reaching out for toys, holding a bottle
- Difficulties with stability, balance and coordination when reaching milestones: (For example, lifting head up when on tummy, sitting unsupported or walking)

Cognitive Development

Delays in reaching milestones such as:

- Mouthing, banging, shaking toys
- Holding or reaching out for toys
- Using problem solving in play: for instance, placing blocks inside a container
- Trouble learning how to turn handles, push buttons, open and shut lids or doors
- Limited interest in pretend play; hugging a doll or pretending to feed a doll
- Limited attention span
- Needing constant redirection to focus on school or activities
- Limited interest in imitating actions
- Difficulty planning actions such as using a chair to find a toy out of his reach

Speech Development Delays

- Stiff or floppy oral muscles limiting the production of sounds or words
- Delays in reaching milestones such as cooing, babbling, repeating sounds back, stringing vowels, following instructions and using words to communicate needs and thoughts

Behavioral/Social Emotional Difficulties

- Constant motion
- Over-reactive to the sensation of movement
- Inability to settle down
- Difficulty modulating affect (moving rapidly from calm to crying, screaming)
- Difficulty adapting to change
- Sleep disturbance
- Aggression
- Impulsivity
- Decreased attention
- Acting out, arguing tantrums
- Easily frustrated with themselves and others



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Things you can do

OBSERVE and LISTEN: Watch for your child's facial or body expressions, cries, or smiles. For instance, he may cry more often when he feels ready for a nap.

READ CUES: Try to understand what he is trying to show you. For instance, he may arch his back and avoid eye contact when he does not want to play anymore.

ACT: Respond to his signals. You may want to take a break away from a crowded or noisy place when he seems inconsolable.

BE PATIENT: It may take a number of trials before you learn what works best for your baby.

Talk with your health care provider about your concerns. They can help you coordinate the developmental activities, referrals, and services needed.

Your child may benefit from:

- Developmental activities you can do at home
- Referral for an evaluation and services through Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) for children under 3 years of age
- For children 3 years and older, contact your school district to request an evaluation. Your child may qualify for the Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD) or Special Education services in school.
- Referral to Physical (PT), Occupational (OT) or Speech (OT) or other Specialties

Resources:

Early Childhood Intervention Services(ECI)

<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services>

Zero to Three

<https://www.zerotothree.org>

CDC Developmental Milestones

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/nas.html>

Healthy Children.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/nas.html>