



The **Behavior** Exchange®
What could be, can be.



Proud to be a Behavioral
Health Center of Excellence®

Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your baby should:

- ☐ Know familiar people
- ☐ Like to look at themselves in a mirror
- ☐ Laugh
- ☐ Take turns making sounds with you
- ☐ Blow “raspberries,” sticking their tongue out while blowing
- ☐ Make squealing noises
- ☐ Put things in their mouth to explore them
- ☐ Reach to grab a toy they want
- ☐ Close their lips to show they don’t want more food
- ☐ Roll over from their cute tummy to their back
- ☐ Push up with straight arms when they’re on their tummy
- ☐ Lean on their hands to support themselves when they’re sitting

**At
6 months**

Ways to support your baby’s development:

- To help them learn to be social, use “back and forth” play with your baby. When your baby smiles, you smile. When they make sounds, copy them.
- “Read” to your baby every day by looking at colorful pictures in magazines or books and talk about them. Respond to them when they babble and “read,” too. For example, if they make sounds, say “Yes, that’s the doggy!”
- Point out new things to your baby and name them. For example, when on a walk, point out cars, trees, and animals.

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your baby avoids or doesn’t keep eye contact.



Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

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North Texas



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Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your baby should:

- ☐ Be shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers
- ☐ Have several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised
- ☐ Look when you call their name
- ☐ React when you leave
- ☐ Smile or laugh when you play peek-a-boo
- ☐ Make a lot of different sounds, like “mamamama” and “babababa”
- ☐ Lift their arms up to be picked up
- ☐ Look for objects when dropped out of sight, like their spoon or toy
- ☐ Bang two things together
- ☐ Get to a sitting position by themselves
- ☐ Move things from one hand to the other
- ☐ Use their fingers to rake food towards them
- ☐ Sit without support

**At
9 Months**



Ways to support your baby's development:

- Repeat your baby's sounds and say simple words using those sounds. For example, if your baby says “bababa,” repeat “bababa,” then say “book.”
- Place toys on the ground or on a play mat a little out of reach and encourage your baby to crawl, scoot, or roll to get them. Celebrate when they reach them.
- Teach your baby to wave “bye-bye” or shake their head “no.” For example, wave and say “bye-bye” when you're leaving. You can also teach simple, baby sign language to help your baby tell you what they want before they can use words.

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your baby doesn't have several different facial expressions.
- Your baby doesn't respond to their name.
- Your baby avoids or doesn't keep eye contact.

Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)





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Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your baby should:

- ☐ Play games with you, like patty-cake
- ☐ Wave bye-bye
- ☐ Call a parent “mama,” “dada,” or other special name
- ☐ Understand “no,” pausing briefly or stopping when you say it
- ☐ Put things into a container, like a block in a cup
- ☐ Look for things they see you hide, like a toy under a blanket
- ☐ Pull up to stand
- ☐ Walk, holding onto furniture
- ☐ Drink from a cup without a lid as you hold it
- ☐ Pick up things, using their thumb and forefinger, like small bits of food

**At
12 Months**



Ways to support your baby's development:

- Teach them “wanted behaviors.” Show them what to do and use positive words or give them hugs and kisses when they do it. For example, if they pull your pet’s tail, teach them how to pet gently and give them a hug when they do it.
- Talk or sing to your baby about what you’re doing. For example, “Mommy is washing your hands” or sing, “This is the way we wash our hands.”
- Build on what your baby tries to say. If they say, “Ta,” say “Yes, a truck,” or if they say, “Truck,” say “Yes, that’s a big, blue truck.”

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your baby doesn’t play simple interactive games, like patty-cake.
- Your baby uses few or no gestures, like waving goodbye.

Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

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Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your child should:

- ☐ Copy other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does
- ☐ Show you an object they like
- ☐ Clap when excited
- ☐ Hug a stuffed doll or other toy
- ☐ Show affection with hugs, cuddles, or kisses
- ☐ Try to say one or two words besides “mama” or “dada,” like “ba” for ball or “da” for dog
- ☐ Look at a familiar object when you name it
- ☐ Follow directions given with both a gesture and words. For example, they give you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, “Give me a toy.
- ☐ Point to ask for something or to get help
- ☐ Try to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book
- ☐ Stack at least two small objects, like blocks
- ☐ Take a few steps on their own
- ☐ Use their fingers to feed themselves

**At
15 Months**



Ways to support your child's development:

- Help your child learn to speak. A child's early words are not complete. Repeat and add to what they say. For example, if they say, “Ba” for ball, say “Ball, yes, that's a ball.”
- Tell your child the names of objects when they point to them, but wait a few seconds to see if they make any sounds before handing it to them. If they do make a sound, acknowledge them, and repeat the name of the object. “Yes! Cup.”
- Find ways to let your child help with everyday activities. Let them get their shoes to go outside, put snacks in a bag for the park, or put their dirty socks in the basket.

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your child doesn't say single words.
- Your child doesn't share their interests with others. For example, they don't show you an object they like.

Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)





Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your child should:

- ☐ Move away from you, but look to make sure you're close by
- ☐ Point to show you something interesting
- ☐ Put their hands out for you to wash them
- ☐ Look at a few pages in a book with you
- ☐ Help you dress them by pushing their arm through a sleeve or lifting up their foot
- ☐ Try to say three or more words besides "mama" or "dada"
- ☐ Follow one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you a toy when you say, "Give it to me."
- ☐ Copy you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom
- ☐ Play with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car
- ☐ Walk without holding on to anyone or anything
- ☐ Scribble
- ☐ Drink from a cup without a lid, but may spill sometimes
- ☐ Feed themselves with their fingers
- ☐ Try to use a spoon
- ☐ Climb on and off a couch or chair without help

**At
18 Months**

Ways to support your child's development:

- Use positive words and give more attention to behaviors you want to see. For example, tell them, "Look how nicely you put the toy away." Give less attention to those behaviors you don't want to see.
- Encourage pretend play. Give your child a spoon so they can pretend to feed their stuffed animal. Take turns pretending.
- Help your child learn about others' feelings and about positive ways to react. For example, when they see a child who's sad, say "They look sad. Let's bring them a teddy."

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your child doesn't engage in pretend play or make-believe
- Your child doesn't point to show you something interesting



Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)



Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your child should:

- ☐ Notice when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- ☐ Look at your face to see how to react in a new situation
- ☐ Point to things in a book when you ask, like “Where is the bear?”
- ☐ Say at least two words together, like “More milk.”
- ☐ Point to at least two body parts when you ask them to show you
- ☐ Use more gestures than just waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes
- ☐ Hold something in one hand, while using the other hand. For example, they hold a container and take off the lid.
- ☐ Try to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- ☐ Play with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate
- ☐ Kick a ball
- ☐ Run
- ☐ Walk (not climb) up a few stairs with or without help
- ☐ Eat with a spoon

**At
24 Months**



Ways to support your child's development:

- Help your child learn how words sound, even if they can't say them clearly yet. For example, if your child says, “Or nana,” say, “You want more banana.”
- Watch your child closely during playdates. Children this age play next to each other, but don't know how to share and solve problems. Show your child how to deal with conflicts by helping them share, take turns, and use words when possible.
- Have your child help you get ready for mealtime, by letting them carry things to the table, such as plastic cups or napkins. Thank your child for helping.

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your child doesn't notice when others are hurt or upset.
- Your child doesn't say meaningful two-word phrases.
- Your child doesn't show any interest in objects by pointing at them.

Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)





Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your child should:

- ☐ Play next to other children and sometimes plays with them
- ☐ Show you what they can do by saying, “Look at me!”
- ☐ Follow simple routines when told, like helping to pick up toys when you say, “It’s clean-up time.”
- ☐ Say about 50 words
- ☐ Say two or more words together, with one action word, like “Doggie run”
- ☐ Name things in a book when you point and ask, “What is this?”
- ☐ Say words like “I,” “me,” or “we”
- ☐ Use things to pretend, like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food
- ☐ Show simple problem-solving skills, like standing on a small stool to reach something
- ☐ Follow two-step instructions, like “Put the toy down and close the door.”
- ☐ Show they know at least one color, like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, “Which one is red?”
- ☐ Use hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids
- ☐ Take some clothes off by themselves, like loose pants or an open jacket
- ☐ Jump off the ground with both feet
- ☐ Turn book pages, one at a time, when you read to them

**At
30 Months**



Ways to support your child’s development:

- Encourage “free” play, where your child can follow their interests, try new things, and use things in new ways.
- Use positive words and give more attention to behaviors you want to see, than to those you don’t. For example, say “I like how you gave Jordan the toy.”
- Give your child food choices that are simple and healthy. Let them choose what to eat for a snack or what to wear. Limit choices to two or three.

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your child plays with toys the same way every time
- Your child repeats words or phrases over and over
- Has unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel

Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)





Early Autism Milestone Checklist:

Your child should:

- ☐ Calm down within 10 minutes after you leave them, like at a childcare
- ☐ Notice other children and join them to play
- ☐ Talk with you in conversation, using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- ☐ Ask “who,” “what,” “where,” or “why” questions, like “Where is mommy/daddy?”
- ☐ Say what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running,” “eating,” or “playing”
- ☐ Say their first name, when asked
- ☐ Talk well enough for others to understand, most of the time
- ☐ Draw a circle, when you show them how
- ☐ Avoid touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn them
- ☐ String items together, like large beads or macaroni
- ☐ Put on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket
- ☐ Use a fork



**At
36 Months**

Ways to support your child's development:

- Encourage your child to solve their own problems with your support. Ask questions to help them understand the problem. Help them think of solutions, try one out, and try more if needed.
- Talk about your child's emotions and give them words to help them explain how they're feeling. Help your child manage stressful feelings by teaching them to take deep breaths, hug a favorite toy, or go to a quiet, safe place when they're upset.
- Set a few simple and clear rules that your child can follow, such as use gentle hands when playing. If they break a rule, show them what to do instead. Later, if your child follows the rule, recognize and congratulate them.

Signs to watch for that could indicate autism:

- Your child doesn't notice other children and join them in play.



Source: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)