

MARCH, 2002

ADAMS COUNTY CHILD HEALTH NOTES:

Adams County Child Health Notes are distributed by Adams County Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and Adams County Health District. This newsletter provides primary health care providers with current information regarding identification and management of special health issues for children. Contributing agencies and programs include: Adams County ICC – Adams County Health District - State of Washington Department of Health and University of Washington - Center on Human Development and Disability. More information is available at http://depts.washington.edu/medhome/CHN/CHN_home.htm



"The benefit to our son from getting into therapy early was HUGE. It helped immensely that our pediatrician listened to our concerns and acted on them immediately. We were referred to physical therapy when our son was 9 months old...[Our pediatrician] continues to be a key person that we rely on to help coordinate all of the services that our son needs."

Parent of a 2-year-old in a Birth-to-3 Program

RED FLAGS IN MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

As a primary medical care provider, you have a unique role in the early detection of infant motor delays. Motor development reflects the maturation of the child's nervous system. Looking at motor development in young infants is a way of telling if the CNS is maturing as expected. Many factors, such as the complications of prematurity or prolonged chronic illness, can delay the appearance of motor milestones. Movement disorders such as cerebral palsy and muscle diseases affect not only the acquisition of motor milestones but also the quality of movement. Although there is controversy about the most effective treatments for motor disabilities, there is some consensus that early intervention enables families to develop strategies, obtain resources and thus function better with a disabled child. **Taking parental concerns seriously and screening for motor milestones and quality of movement at well-child checks is the first step toward successful early intervention.**

WHAT ARE RED FLAGS IN MOTOR DEVELOPMENT?

The following are red flags in motor development. If you observe **one or more** of these red flags, refer the child for further neuro-developmental assessment. These red flags are based on skills demonstrated by at least 90% of children at each age. (If the child was born prematurely, use the child's corrected age.)

2 months

- ▶ Infant does not move both arms and legs actively in play when supine
- ▶ Infant does not use eyes to follow or focus on an adult's face

4 months

- ▶ Infant cannot hold head erect and steady when held at an adult's shoulder
- ▶ Infant cannot maintain head centered and bring hands together when supine
- ▶ Infant cannot hold onto a toy placed in either hand
- ▶ Infant's leg(s) are stiff and feet are plantar flexed (toes pointed) in most positions
- ▶ One or two hands are tightly fistled and/or ipsilateral leg is stiff
- ▶ Infant has poor visual tracking or eyes are crossed

6 months

- ▶ Infant does not reach and grab toys with one or both hands
- ▶ Infant takes little or no weight on legs or does so with legs stiffly extended, on toes
- ▶ Infant does not sit well with support
- ▶ Head is not vertical when infant is prone

9 months

- ▶ Infant does not sit alone with arms free
- ▶ Infant does not roll supine to prone
- ▶ Infant does not transfer toys from hand to hand

12 months

- ▶ Infant does not pull to standing at furniture
- ▶ Infant does not bang 2 objects together

15 months

- ▶ Infant does not lower himself from standing with control
- ▶ Infant is not yet walking with one hand held

18 months

- ▶ Infant is not yet walking alone

WHERE TO REFER FOR FURTHER ASSESSMENT IF YOU SEE RED FLAGS:

- You or the parent can contact a Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) in your area to assist with access to neuro-developmental assessment and early intervention services if you see one of these red flags or if you see a persistent asymmetry after 4 months.
- Refer to pediatric ophthalmology if eyes are persistently crossed at 3 months or more.

