

Development of Infants and Toddlers

Physical Development

Birth - 1 year

- The development of control and mastery over one's own body in both gross and fine motor skills is the infant's primary physical task, culminating toward the end of the first year in walking.

Age 1-2 years

- The infant perfects the gross and fine motor skills that emerged during the first year by developing balance, coordination, stability, and an improved ability to manipulate objects.

Age 2-3 years

- The child develops increased strength and uses sensory and motor skills to master challenges in the environment, such as bicycles, stairs, balls, play-ground equipment, eating utensils, crayons, and other objects. The child is developmentally ready to master toilet training.

Cognitive Development

Birth - 1 year

- Cognition begins with alertness, awareness, recognition, and interest in visual, auditory, and tactile (touch) stimuli. As motor development improves, the infant begins to explore and manipulate objects and develops a rudimentary understanding of their properties. Infants develop *object permanence* toward the end of the first year.



Age 1-2 years

- The emergence of symbolic thought is central to cognitive development. This results in the ability to understand and produce language.

Age 2-3 years

- Perfection of language skills and the use of language to communicate with others are the principle cognitive tasks.

Social Development

Birth - 1 year

- The most important social task is the development of attachment to the primary caretaker, most often the child's mother.

Age 1-2 years

- The child develops affectionate and trusting relationships with other family members and with adults outside the family. The child can also be engaged in simple games and play.

Age 2-3 years

- The child develops rudimentary relationships with other children, that are usually characterized by "parallel play," that is play in the presence of, rather than in interaction with, other children. Children also begin to imitate social roles at this time. Toilet training represents a significant internalization of social rules and expectations.



Emotional Development

Birth - 1 year

- The development of basic trust, a derivative of the positive attachment between the infant and the primary caretaker, occurs during the first year. This is a cornerstone of emotional development.

Age 1-3 years

- The primary developmental task involves the development of autonomy, which includes mastery and control over oneself and one's environment. Children develop a rudimentary self-concept, experiencing pride and pleasure at being "good" and embarrassment, shame, and distress at being "bad."

