Motor Development

Keywords
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URL

Motor development

Educators and therapists often talk about motor development. In simple terms motor skills refer to movements and actions of the muscles. Gross motor skills involve movement of the arms, legs, feet, or entire body. Fine motor skills are the small movements that occur in the hands, wrists, fingers, feet, toes, lips and tongue.
Children start developing their gross motor skills from birth through getting control over their head, trunk and arms and legs and refine these abilities throughout the preschool years.
Gross motor control enables children to develop the fine motor movements that are required to be able to hold a pencil, cut, draw, eat with a knife and fork and for dressing and doing buttons among others.
When children climb, run and play they develop an awareness of where their bodies are in space. This helps them to grasp position, order and sequencing, which are vital for learning to read and write and to do maths.

If difficulty occurs in the development of gross motor skills, difficulties with fine motor development could also be expected and the child may have difficulties in the performance of daily activities such as eating, writing, dressing, ball skills, cutting, sitting still in a chair for the required time in class, etc. Many times an educator will pick this up and raise the concern to the parents and suggest occupational therapy.

When to be concerned:
• Your child is not walking by 15 months of age
• Not walking maturely (heel to toe) after walking for several months
• Walking only on the toes
• Does not seem to use one hand at all or has a strong hand preference before one year
• Not sitting, rolling or crawling within the expected time frames
• After two years still walks clumsily, losing balance
• After two years still throws a ball with difficulty
• Jumps with difficulty after two years
• Tends to push too hard, holds or pats pets too hard, breaks toys unintended
• Does not ride a tricycle after 3 years
• The child tends to fall quite often, or does not put arms out quickly enough when falling
• Avoids outside play, running and climbing
• Avoids tasks such as colouring
• Struggles to eat with a knife and fork, or is messy when eating
• Struggles to do buttons
• Has difficulty with chewing food
• Prefers to lie down, slouches or ‘hangs’ onto objects or people
• Has stiff arms and/or legs
• Has a floppy or limp body posture compared to other children of the same age
• Lies on arms when working at a desk or rests head in hand
• Turns sideways in chair when colouring or turns page sideways
• Often sits with an open mouth
• Struggles to skip after 5/6 years of age
• Prone to accidents
• Poor pencil grasp
• Difficulty with copying from the board
If you notice some of the above, it is advisable to have your child assessed by an occupational therapist, who could make further recommendations regarding possible interventions.

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