

Factors Affecting Growth and Development

1. Physical Development- Your child's physical development consists of the height, weight, development of muscles and bones. The following factors affect a child's physical development.

2. Genetics - Your child inherits your physical characteristics through genes. If your child is carrying a dominant gene related to height, he/she might achieve the same height as you. However, there are some disorders and health issues that are passed on genetically such as heart diseases, diabetes, obesity etc. These problems can affect your child's weight, muscle and bone development etc.

3. Nutrition-Your child's body needs the right amount of Carbohydrates, Proteins, Vitamins, and Minerals for his/her physical development. For example, Calcium is important for the development of bones, Vitamin E for developing the immune system, iron is important for immunity, proteins build body strength and Vitamin A is essential for vision in poor lighting. If not provided proper nutrition, your child's growth might get stunted.

4. Exercise and Health- The word exercise here does not mean physical exercise as a discipline or children deliberately engaging in physical activities knowing it would help them grow. Exercise here refers to the normal playtime and sports activities which help the body gain an increase in muscular strength and put on bone mass. Proper exercise helps children grow well and reach milestones on time or sooner. Exercise also keeps them healthy and fights off diseases by strengthening the immune system, especially if they play outside. This is because outdoor play exposes them to microbes that help them build resistance and prevent allergies.

5. Mental And Cognitive Development- The mental and cognitive development of your child consists of the development of the brain, neurological processes, intellectual abilities, learning abilities etc.5 The following factors affect a child's mental and cognitive development.

6. Nutrition - If your child doesn't get the right nutrition, it will adversely affect his/her mental development. For example, deficiency of Iodine, Iron, Vitamin B12 and Folic acid can cause mental retardation and in extreme cases, even neurological damage. Nutritional drinks like Horlicks can help you bridge the gap between nutritional requirements and consumption by the child.

7. Environment - Lead, manganese, arsenic poisoning has been known to cause cognitive dysfunction in children especially at the age of 6 years to 12 years. Mercury poisoning can lead to impaired language skills, attention and memory.

8. Emotional And Social Development - A child's emotional development consists of understanding, expressing and managing his/her emotions, while social development includes his/her behaviour with other people. The following factors affect a child's emotional and social development:

9. Parenting And Culture- Studies show that harsh parenting practices - like shouting, rough punishing, shaming - can cause the child to either become unusually indifferent or hypersensitive. On the other hand, a loving, caring, trustful relationship with your child can help him/her become an emotionally mature individual. Cultural norms determine a child's social interactions. For example, in many cultures aggression is more acceptable in men than in women so growing in a certain cultural setting, a boy might grow more aggressive. While the above-mentioned factors play a crucial role in different aspects of your child's growth and development, you play an active role in facilitating. Hence, it is imperative that you take the necessary steps for his/her all round development.

10. Learning and Reinforcement- Learning involves much more than schooling. It is also concerned with building the child up mentally, intellectually, emotionally, and socially so they operate as healthy functional individuals in the society. This is where the development of the mind takes place and the child can gain some maturity. Reinforcement is a component of learning where an activity or exercise is repeated and refined to solidify the lessons learned. An example is playing a musical instrument; they get better at playing it

as they practice playing the instrument. Therefore, any lesson that is taught has to be repeated until the right results are obtained.

11. Familial Influence- Families have the most profound impact in nurturing a child and determining the ways in which they develop psychologically and socially. Whether they are raised by their parents, grandparents or foster care, they need basic love, care and courtesy to develop as healthy functional individuals. The most positive growth is seen when families invest time, energy and love in the development of the child through activities, such as reading to them, playing with them and having deep meaningful conversations. Families that abuse or neglect children would affect their positive development. These children may end up as individuals who have poor social skills and difficulty bonding with other people as adults.

12. Hormones- Hormones belong to the endocrine system and influence the various functions of our bodies. They are produced by different glands that are situated in specific parts of the body to secrete hormones that control body functions. Their timely functioning is critical for normal physical growth and development in children. Imbalances in the functioning of hormone-secreting glands can result in growth defects, obesity, behavioural problems and other diseases. During puberty, the gonads produce sex hormones which control the development of the sex organs and the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics in boys and girls.