

RED FLAGS IN MOTOR DEVELOPMENT IN PRE-K CHILDREN

Before you Begin

Check:

- ▶ Birthday
- ▶ Child's health
- ▶ What skills are appropriate for age
- ▶ Schedule: home school changes
- ▶ History of prematurity
- ▶ Birth trauma
- ▶ Family learning differences

Remember to Check:

- ▶ To what degree does the behavior impact everyday life?
- ▶ Consistency of behavior: home, school, other classes? All the time or just one isolated instance?
- ▶ Time of day it occurs or with which activity/class/subject it is more prevalent.
- ▶ Type of day: Holiday season? Birthday? Regular day?
- ▶ Position of the child when it occurs.

Motor Support Systems

- ▶ Tactile Perception
- ▶ Vestibular
- ▶ Proprioception
- ▶ Visual
- ▶ What you see is an outward manifestation of one or more of these systems.

GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Moving About:

Does the child:

- ▶ Fall frequently? (balance)
- ▶ Move around the room without bumping into people or objects? (body awareness)
- ▶ Move from one position to another without holding onto furniture or help from a person? (strength and tone)

Red Flags: Child who consistently

- ▶ Bumps into furniture or people
- ▶ Trips over objects or falls frequently from his chair
- ▶ Needs to hold onto furniture or people to rise from the floor

Sitting:

Does the child:

- ▶ Sit down or prefer to stand up? (balance, attention):

Check furniture and activity first.

Red Flags: Child who consistently:

- ▶ Insists on standing for all activities
- ▶ Wraps his legs around the chair legs
- ▶ Always sits on his legs in the chair

Criss Cross Applesauce

Does the child:

- ▶ Side sit or sit criss-cross applesauce on the floor? (hips, crossing midline)

Red Flags: Child who consistently

- ▶ Cannot sit "criss cross" applesauce. Hips need to be checked by the family doctor

Head Placement

Does the child

- ▶ Place their head in their hands, tilted to one side? (vision)

Red Flags: Child who consistently

- ▶ Places head in hands may be blocking one eye. Check visual tracking by professional.

Prone (on stomach propped on arms)

Red Flags

- ▶ Child refuses to play or lie on stomach even after special positioning.

Hand Placement

Does the child:

- ▶ Move his hands across the table smoothly to reach and pick up objects? (crossing midline)
- ▶ Have hand dominance established at an early age?

Red Flags: Child who consistently

- ▶ Has difficulty using two hands together for activities such as catching a ball rolled to them, rolling out play dough, using scissors, dressing activities
- ▶ Hand dominance set since early months

Outside Play

Does the child:

- ▶ Feel comfortable on most of the playground equipment? (body awareness, gravitational insecurity)
- ▶ Prefer to play only in the sandbox? (motor planning)

Red Flags: Child who consistently

- ▶ Is Not comfortable on climbing equipment even with assistance
- ▶ Appears to be fearful if feet are off the ground
- ▶ Does not play except in the sandbox
- ▶ Appears to be fearful if feet are off the ground
- ▶ Watches and lags behind with gross motor activities

Imaginary Play

Does the child:

- ▶ Does the child interact with other children in imaginary play? (social skills, visualization)

Red Flags: Child who consistently:

- ▶ Poor eye contact
- ▶ Difficulty interacting with other children
- ▶ Difficulty interacting with other children
- ▶ Creating “play” situations

FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Arm Placement

Does the child:

- ▶ Have arms stretched out or locked into the ribcage? (tone, strength, postural support)
- ▶ Have shoulders “scrunched” near their ears?(tone, strength, postural support)

Red Flags: Child who consistently:

- ▶ Keeps arms very close to chest during hand activities
- ▶ Keeps shoulders “hiked” near ears

Hand Activity

Does the child:

- ▶ Hold the tools they are working with correctly: markers,, scissors? (tone, strength)
- ▶ Use each hand effectively by itself or together? (bilateral integration)
- ▶ Avoid textures or messiness with their hands? (tactile defensive)
- ▶ Have hands which shake, hurt or tire easily? (tremors, tone, strength)
- ▶ Which hand are they using for what task? (crossing midline, hand dominance) Consult developmental skill levels to see if child is old enough for hand dominance.

Red Flags: Child who consistently:

- ▶ Gets tired easily: endurance is reduced for age
- ▶ Complains of hand fatigue or pain consistently
- ▶ Is frustrated with writing, cutting, etc.
- ▶ Consistently avoids messiness.

VISUAL AND VISUAL PERCEPTION

Does the child:

- ▶ Frequently tilt head to one side or cover one eye with hand?
- ▶ Do they insist on sitting in one particular spot in the classroom?
- ▶ Struggle or refuse to engage in visual perceptual activities such as puzzles, parquetry block patterns
- ▶ Draw both diagonals after age 5 ½ years?

Red Flags: Child who consistently:

- ▶ Consistently tilts head to one side
- ▶ Covers one eye with hand or by laying head down on table
- ▶ Avoids visual perceptual items such as puzzles, block patterns
- ▶ Does not follow people or objects with eyes
- ▶ Poor eye contact

TOUCH/BODY AWARENESS

Does the child:

- ▶ Press too hard or too lightly on the paper with the pencil ?
- ▶ Hold the pencil way up the shaft as if to get away from the paper? (check developmental age)
- ▶ Avoid getting messy?
- ▶
- ▶ Choose only soft foods to eat, very picky about texture of foods, clothes, and play things?
- ▶ Show ultra sensitivity to noise, overhead lights, or too much visual on a page?
- ▶ Jump too hard, forcefully bump into walls or furniture or people

Red Flags: Child who consistently:

- ▶ Gets “stuck” and can’t get unstuck
- ▶ Is totally o.k. in one situation but falls apart in another.
- ▶ Takes an unusual amount of effort to wake up or to maintain focus
- ▶ Becomes easily overwhelmed
- ▶ Constantly moving
- ▶ Overly sensitive to environment, food, clothes

GENERAL

Does the child have difficulty: Remembering letter formations after they have been taught correctly and thoroughly (Eliminate letter name retrieval from inability to write the letter by giving the child a picture of the letter to copy or giving him the sound)? Retrieving names of shapes or letters appropriate to age group?

WHO TO REFER TO:

Developmental Delays

- ▶ Developmental Pediatrician
- ▶ Psychologist

Specific Motor Weakness

- ▶ Occupational Therapist
- ▶ Physical Therapist

Sensorimotor Problem

- ▶ Occupational Therapist
- ▶ Speech Therapist (oral motor)

Visual

- ▶ Pediatric Optometrist or Ophthalmologist

ALWAYS LOOK FOR CLUSTERS OF BEHAVIORS THAT ARE CONSISTENT!