



# Red Flags Early Identification Guide

for children aged birth to five years SECOND EDITION

The *Red Flags Early Identification Guide (for children aged birth to five years)* is a **health resource for professionals** (including general practitioners, child health nurses, allied health professionals and early childhood educators) working with families, to help identify developmental concerns early, so families can receive support from the right professionals at the right time.

The *Red Flags Early Identification Guide* will:

- Assist with early identification of developmental concerns in a child's developmental domains (social/emotional; communication; fine motor/cognition/self-care; and gross motor) that are impacting on their day-to-day functioning.
- Assist with clinical decision making when used in conjunction with other evidence-based screening tools, such as the *Parents Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)* and/or *Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)*. **The guide is not a standardised screening tool and should not replace standardised assessment.**
- Facilitate conversation with parents/carers around their child's development and the benefits of early identification and early intervention in particular when a parent may not be concerned about their child's development.
- Facilitate conversation about a plan of action and where to obtain a more detailed developmental screen and/or assessment.

### Tips for using the guide

- Children's Health Queensland recommends this resource be used in **discussions with parents/carers** about typical development and parental understanding/expectations of development. This process facilitates identification of parental concerns/questions about a child's growth, development and activities of daily living.
- A single red flag is not always an indication for concern or referral, rather the functional impact of one or more red flags on the child's everyday functioning and participation, should be taken into consideration.
- The negative statements of 'does not...' and 'not able to...' have been used to highlight a delay/lack of acquisition of skills. The red flags have been linked to the absence or delay of skill/s which lie at the boundary of the typical developmental range. Therefore the guide should not be used as a 'milestones' screener, as the red flags are not developmental milestones.
- This second edition includes revised red flags and directions for appropriate use.

### Stimulate your child's development with PLAY!

- P Partner:** be your child's partner in play. Follow their lead and wait for them to take their turn.
- L Look and listen:** adjust the play to your child's level and follow their instructions.
- A Add:** introduce new ideas to guide, support and expand on the play your child is leading.
- Y You and your child together:** get down on their level and enjoy being together.

### Ways to PLAY?

- Use your senses: touch, listen and look at objects (e.g. sand, leaves and toys)
- Move about: help your child move, push and pull objects
- Out and about: go to libraries, talk about books; visit parks – climb, throw and kick balls, ride a bike
- Talk and problem solve, e.g. with puzzles
- Use imagination: play out simple ideas and gradually introduce different scenarios or roles; play with dolls/teddies/figurines; creatively use boxes or containers as play objects (e.g. as a car)
- Explore: use a variety of things for your child to explore and play with e.g. bubbles, pots and pans, play doh. Your cupboards are full of exciting things!

Area	6 months	9 months	12 months	18 months	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	Red flags at any age
<b>Social emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not smile or interact with people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not sharing enjoyment with others using eye contact or facial expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not notice someone new</li> <li>Does not play early turn-taking games (e.g. peekaboo, rolling a ball)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacks interest in playing and interacting with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When playing with toys tends to bang, drop or throw them rather than use them for their purpose (e.g. cuddle dolls, build blocks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interest in pretend play or interacting with other children</li> <li>Difficulty noticing and understanding feelings in themselves and others (e.g. happy, sad)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwilling or unable to play cooperatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play is different than their friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong parental concerns</li> <li>Significant loss of skills</li> <li>Lack of response to sound or visual stimuli</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not starting to babble (e.g. aahh; oohh)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not using gestures (e.g. pointing, showing, waving)</li> <li>Not using two part babble (e.g. bubu, dada)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No babbled phrases that sound like talking</li> <li>No response to familiar words (e.g. bottle, daddy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No clear words</li> <li>Not able to understand short requests (e.g. 'Where is the ball?')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not learning new words</li> <li>Not putting words together (e.g. 'push car')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speech difficult for familiar people to understand</li> <li>Not using simple sentences (e.g. 'Big car go')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speech difficult to understand</li> <li>Not able to follow directions with two steps (e.g. 'Put your bag away and then go play')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty telling a parent what is wrong</li> <li>Not able to answer questions in a simple conversation (e.g. 'What's your name? Who is your family? What do you like to watch on TV?')</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor interaction with adults or other children</li> <li>Lack of, or limited eye contact</li> </ul>
<b>Cognition, fine motor and self care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not reaching for and holding (grasping) toys</li> <li>Hands frequently clenched</li> <li>Does not explore objects with hands, eyes and mouth</li> <li>Does not bring hands together at midline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not hold objects</li> <li>Does not 'give' objects on request</li> <li>Cannot move toy from one hand to another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not feed self finger foods or hold own bottle/cup</li> <li>Unable to pick up small items using index finger and thumb</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not scribble with a crayon</li> <li>Does not attempt to stack blocks after demonstration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not attempt to feed self using a spoon and/or help with dressing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not attempt everyday self care skills (such as feeding or dressing)</li> <li>Difficulty in manipulating small objects (e.g. threading beads)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not toilet trained by day</li> <li>Not able to draw lines and circles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns from teacher about school readiness</li> <li>Not able to independently complete everyday routines such as feeding and dressing</li> <li>Not able to draw simple pictures (e.g. stick person)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differences between right and left sides of body in strength, movement or tone</li> <li>Marked low tone (floppy) or high tone (stiff and tense) and significantly impacting on development and functional motor skills</li> </ul>
<b>Gross motor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not holding head and shoulders up with good control when lying on tummy</li> <li>Not holding head with control in supported sitting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not rolling</li> <li>Not sitting independently/without support</li> <li>Not moving (e.g. creeping, crawling)</li> <li>Not taking weight on legs when held in standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No form of independent mobility (e.g. crawling, commando crawling, bottom shuffle)</li> <li>Not pulling to stand independently and holding on for support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not standing independently</li> <li>Not attempting to walk without support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not able to walk independently</li> <li>Not able to walk up and down stairs holding on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not able to walk up and down stairs independently</li> <li>Not able to run or jump</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not able to walk, run, climb, jump and use stairs confidently</li> <li>Not able to catch, throw or kick a ball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not able to walk, run, climb, jump and use stairs confidently</li> <li>Not able to hop five times on one leg and stand on one leg for five seconds</li> </ul>	



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**Child Health Service** call 1300 366 039

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