

MILESTONES AS CHILD'S PLAY:

Meeting Developmental Milestones Through Play

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OBJECTIVES

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- Learners will **identify key developmental milestones** for children at ages corresponding with ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaires) screens, to track and support early development.
- Learners will **apply play-based activities** appropriate to each developmental stage that support developmental milestones and encourage active caregiver participation.
- Learners will **recommend environmental set ups** for each developmental stage, that promote both safety and developmental progress.
- Learners will **identify and be able to recommend activities, toys, and tools** that enable caregivers to effectively support their child's development and the mental health of the caregiver-child dyad.

AGENDA

- Introduction
- Developmental milestones and play by age
- Hands on, small group learning activities
- Conclusion
- Q&A



INTRODUCTION

Jessica Peterson

OTD, OTR, CLC, CEIM, PMH-C

- Occupational Therapist specializing in maternal and infant health
- Co-owner of Matrescence Occupational Therapy with Gayle Schwee, OTR, MOT, PMH-C
- Certified Lactation Counselor
- Infant Massage Educator
- Certified in Maternal Perinatal Health
- Mom of two



Developmental Milestones and Play by Age Group



WHY PLAY?

- Play is essential for healthy child development.
- Through play, children develop crucial life skills such as problem-solving, emotional regulation, and teamwork.
- Engaging in play allows children to form strong, supportive relationships, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and empathize with others, thereby building a foundation for healthy emotional and social development .
- Play promotes physical development, and is crucial to achieving important milestones such as motor skills, coordination, and overall physical strength



4 MONTHS



Key Milestones

- Brings toys and hands to mouth
- Turns head evenly side to side
- Lifts head in tummy time
- Makes attempts to roll

Set Up

- Firm, clean, clear and safe surface
 - Pack n play
- Reduce use of containers
 - Caregiver-facing baby carrier



PLAY AT 4 MONTHS



Ball

- Bounce with caregiver
- Supported in prone (Tummy time)
- Supported in supine (Guppy)

Block

- Tracking
- Hands to mouth
- Assisted knock over the tower
- Reach for block

Container

- Hide the block
- Shake for sound
- Explore textures

More play

- Kicking in supine
- Caregiver facilitates rolling
 - Bathtime
 - Diaper changes
- Infant massage to legs, arms, back and tummy



6 MONTHS



Key Milestones

- Feet and objects to mouth
- Passes objects from hand to hand
- Prop sits
- Reaches in prone

Set Up

- Firm, clean and clear surface
- Place toys around baby
- If mobile, safe physical barriers
- Raise toys for upright play if sitting



PLAY AT 6 MONTHS



Ball

- Supported sit and tilt
- High bounce with caregiver
- Sit on lap and tilt

Block

- Knock over the tower
- Assisted stacking
- Rainbow of blocks

Container

- Find the block
- Stack blocks on top
- Open the box
- Assisted putting away toys

More play

- Upright toys that encourage reaching and grasping
- Balls or rolling toys that encourage reaching and locomotion
- Peek-a-boo
- This little piggy massage



10 MONTHS

10



Key Milestones

- Uses pincer grasp
- Pulls to kneel or stand
- Transitions through positions independently
- Forward locomotion
- Introduced to solid foods

Set Up

- Secured or sturdy furniture to facilitate cruising and pulling up
- Environment free of potential choking and falling hazards



PLAY AT 10 MONTHS

11



Ball

- Standing against ball to wall
- Chasing while crawling
- Prone to reach for floor
- Supported sit at hips and tilt

Block

- Bangs blocks together
- Balance blocks on different objects
- Caregiver names shapes, colors and letters

Container

- Opens and closes the box
- Find items that fit
- Puts away toys with assistance

More play

- Clapping, patting
- Shape sorter, containers
- Exploring environments
- Water play
- Caregiver reads familiar books
- Infant massage firm to soft, naming body parts



12 MONTHS

12



Key Milestones

- Meaningful words (1-2) and speech sounds
- Points to communicate
- Finger feeds self
- Cruises with rotation; may stand alone or take steps

Set Up

- Child-accessible toy storage
- Secured furniture, reduced clutter in play space
- Variety of spaces to explore



PLAY AT 12 MONTHS

13



Ball

- Pushes ball with resistance
- Chases while walking or cruising
- Roll ball back and forth with caregiver or sibling

Block

- 2-block towers
- Naming colors
- Choosing colors "Give me the red one!"

Container

- Choosing and naming items inside
- Operates latches
- Nests items

More play

- Blow bubbles
- Pretend play
- Singing
- Reading
- Infant massage: tell a story, have baby repeat words



18 MONTHS



Key Milestones

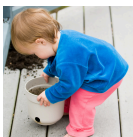
- Walks independently and competently
- Imitates simple words, phrases and actions
- Holds and drinks from a straw and/or open cup
- Eats a variety of foods

Set Up

- Large spaces with child-accessible toy storage
- Parks, playgrounds, yards



PLAY AT 18 MONTHS



Ball

- Lifting ball
- Kicking ball
- Chasing ball outside

Block

- 3-block towers
- Balance blocks on different objects
- Names letters, colors, shapes and numbers

Container

- Carries box with items
- Pours items out
- Puts away toys independently

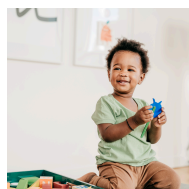
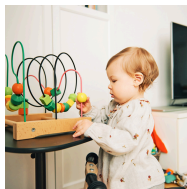
More play

- Explores the community
- Imaginative and sensory play
- Pushes and pulls toys/ items
- Chases, kicks, lifts, pours
- Gross motor obstacle courses
- Infant massage: joint compression, storytelling



24 MONTHS

16



Key Milestones

- Runs
- Climbs
- Manipulates
- Follows simple directions
- Uses 2 word phrases

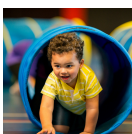
Set Up

- Family or community areas with other like-aged children
- Supports music, exploration
- Child's space is predictable and safe



PLAY AT 24 MONTHS

17



Ball

- Use as part of an obstacle course
- Deep pressure
- Bouncing, tossing
- Kicking

Block

- Highest tower game
- Group into like categories (letters, numbers, colors, etc.)
- Imaginative play

Container

- Imaginative play
- Climb in and out
- "What is in the box?"
- Sensory play

More play

- Obstacle courses: tunnels, steps, slides, swings
- Sensory play: sand, water, texture, foods
- Fine motor: crayons, chalk, fasteners
- Infant massage: child's choice



INFANT MASSAGE



● Benefits to child

- Shown to improve weight gain, immune function, sleep, brain maturation, circulation, temperature stability



● Benefits to caregiver

- Increases caregiver confidence and efficacy, increased opportunities for bonding and shown to be a positive experience for parents.

● Contraindications

- Severe distress
- Acute injury, recent surgery
- Contagious skin, cancer*, systemic edema, cardiac conditions*

● Application

- Always gain consent
- Pressure needs to be developmentally appropriate
- Only massage a regulated child



IMPACT OF NURTURING TOUCH



- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) identifies nurturing parenting skills as one of the most important protective factors for lessening child abuse and neglect.
- According to the CDC, the potential outcomes of enhanced parenting skills and family relationships include:
 - Reductions in child abuse and neglect perpetration
 - Reductions in risk factors for child abuse and neglect (e.g., parental substance use, criminal involvement, timing of subsequent births, child behavioral problems)
 - Improved parent-child interactions (e.g., increased nurturing)
 - Improved parenting behaviors (e.g., child behavior management), including reductions in use of harsh verbal and physical discipline
 - Improved violence prevention-related knowledge, behaviors, and beliefs
 - Fewer emergency room visits and hospital stays
 - Reductions in use of welfare
 - Reductions in criminal behavior
 - Reductions in youth substance use and arrests



From Infant Massage USA Source:
[CDC 1](#) / [CDC 2](#)

INFANT & TODDLER MASSAGE



4 months

- Resting hands
- May prefer prone
- Slow, firm strokes
- Maintain contact at all times

6 months

- Resting hands
- May prefer sitting up or during nursing
- Slow, firm to faster strokes

10 months

- Use to calm and regulate
- Use to ease transitions
- Slow, firm to softer, faster strokes

12 months

- Use to calm and regulate
- Use to ease transitions
 - Bathtime
 - Bedtime

18 months

- Child-led
- Deep and firm pressure to light "tickles"
- Integrate story-telling

24 months

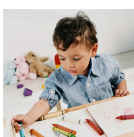
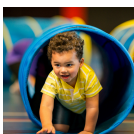
- Child-led
- May be part of family routines
- Modeling for controlled and respectful touch

HANDS-ON, SMALL GROUP LEARNING

- Small group practice of infant and child massage (15 minutes)
- Brainstorm and share (5 minutes)



PRACTICE IN SMALL GROUPS



4 months

- Start with resting hands
- Practice strokes for stomach and chest
- Discuss how you might use these strokes with your families at a 4 month check in

6 months

- Start with resting hands
- Practice strokes for legs and feet
- Discuss how you might use these strokes with your families at a 6 month check in

10 months

- Start with resting hands
- Practice strokes for arms and hands
- Discuss how you might use these strokes with your families at a 10 month check in

12 months

- Start with resting hands
- Practice strokes for back
- Discuss how you might use these strokes with your families at a 12 month check in

18 months

- Start with resting hands
- Practice gentle movements
- Discuss how you might use these strokes with your families at an 18 month check in

24 months

- Start with resting hands
- Practice story telling with nurturing touch
- Discuss how you might use these strokes with your families at a 24 month check in

BRAINSTORM AND SHARE

- How do you think developmental play, infant massage and nurturing touch would benefit the families you serve?
- Can you share an example activity that you might suggest to a family after attending this workshop?



CONCLUSION

- 1** Play and infant massage can be used to increase engagement, bonding and nurturing touch between caregiver and child
- 2** Strategic play-based activities can promote meeting developmental milestones and can be set up safely with a variety of household objects, simple toys and natural environments
- 3** As public health and healthcare providers, you have the tools and knowledge to support families and caregivers to promote growth and development in children.



QUESTIONS?



Thank you!



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 **Matrescence Occupational Therapy**



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