

## **Developmental Delay and Disabilities**

Developmental delays can be major or minor delays in a child's development, which may be due to a variety of causes. For example, delays can occur secondary to medical conditions (e.g. delayed language development following prolonged and recurring ear infections). Developmental disabilities are conditions that a child is born with that makes learning and development more difficult. Developmental disabilities may be caused by genetic abnormalities (e.g. Down's Syndrome) or structural abnormalities (e.g. Cerebral Palsy). Other causes can include premature birth or neurological deficits. Occasionally, there is no single known cause (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder).

It is helpful to be aware of signs of developmental delays and disabilities in children. These are significant lags in one or more areas of emotional, cognitive, language or physical growth. If your child experiences a delay, early diagnosis and intervention is the key to help your child improve and catch up with his/her peers.

### **How is it treated?**

Treatment will aim to improve the child's performance in the delayed aspects of his/her functioning. A pediatrician or a neurologist will complete their assessment and refer the child to the appropriate therapist.

Treatment options include feeding and/or speech and language therapy by speech therapists, therapy to improve fine motor and social skills by occupational therapists, or therapy to improve gross motor skills to achieve developmental milestones by physiotherapists.

### **What does rehabilitation involve?**

Rehabilitation aims to improve the child's ability to perform and participate in school and at home, as well as to equip parents with strategies to assist in their child's development.

In general, developmentally appropriate play and activities are used to aid the child's development in various areas. Specific treatment approaches by physiotherapists may include neurodevelopmental therapy and motor relearning. In addition, occupational therapists may include Floortime Approach (social engagement) and Touchpoints (anticipatory guidance) as part of intervention. Speech therapists may use Hanen programmes, play or tabletop activities to facilitate the development of the child's communication.

A comprehensive initial assessment will be conducted followed by an individually tailored programme for the child and family. The relevant therapists will jointly collaborate with caregivers to provide fun and developmentally appropriate activities geared towards achieving each child's developmental milestones.

### **Useful websites**

[Child Speech and Language](#)

[Brazelton Touchpoints Centre](#)

[The Greenspan Floortime Approach](#)

[The Hanen Centre – Speech and Language Development](#)