

Early Intervention

Some of the questions parents ask when leaving the unit are

'Will my baby's development be normal?'

'What's corrected age?'

'Will they have learning difficulties?'

'What can I do to help encourage their development?'

It's reassuring to know that most premature babies have normal development. Extremely premature, or low birth weight and sick babies have a higher risk of development problems – but even in these cases, many babies develop normally.

Corrected age, or adjusted age, is your premature baby's chronological age minus the number of weeks or months he was born early. For example, a one-year-old who was born three months early would have a corrected age of nine months.

Whilst it's good to keep a careful eye on your child's development, it's also worth remembering that there's a big range of 'normal' and all children have variations in their development, regardless of whether they were premature or full-term.

What is early intervention?

Early intervention can be used to describe a number of ways that professionals can support children and whanau to have the best outcome for their child. It's used to help families whose children have special needs, developmental delays or behavioural issues to help minimise these and to allow them to reach developmental milestones and grow in all areas of their life.

Why is it important?

Because research shows that early is the key to supporting children and making progress with their learning and development, the idea is to lessen the effect of the disability or delay. These areas can include, physical, cognitive, communication, social, emotional and adaptive.



Who is eligible?

Children who have a disability or developmental delays can be supported by early intervention, they don't necessarily need to have been diagnosed. The earlier children are seen, the better the outcome, especially when intervention occurs between 0-8 years old.

How do I get referred or can I self refer?

Many children with a disability can benefit from some type of early intervention. You can get these therapies through community health centres, hospitals, specialist disability services or early intervention services. Your GP, paediatrician or other parents can also tell you about private therapists. If you are concerned talk to a health professional, plunket or ECE provider.



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Will it cost me?

Not necessarily, most services are funded, however you choose to go to an early intervention centre like WEIT or conductive education then there is usually a fee. The Ministry of Education is government funded and so is the Child Development Service.

What support is available for my child?

There is a huge amount of support available to help you and your child and early intervention will often combine specialist support and therapies. You might end up using some government-funded services as well as community service organisations and private therapists. Below are just a few of the services available, for more information, please see your health professional.



Ministry of Education - Focus on education; supporting children at home and also in the early childhood setting. They don't work alongside Physio or Occupational Therapists but work closely with:

- *Early Intervention Teacher*
- *Learning and Behaviour Supports*
- *Speech and Language Therapists*
- *Psychologists*
- *Advisors on deaf children*
- *Education support workers*
- *Kaitakawaenga (Māori cultural advisors).*

Child Development Service - Focus on Developmental and Health

- *Physiotherapists*
- *Neurodevelopmental therapists*
- *Feeding specialists.*

Occupational therapy - can help with fine motor skills, play and self-help skills like dressing and toileting. Physiotherapy can help with motor skills like balance, sitting, crawling and walking.

Speech therapy - can help with speech, language, eating and drinking skills.

Conductive Education - is a centre for children with motor disabilities and/or developmental delays.

TalkLink - provide assistive technology and strategies which supplement or replace speech or writing for those with impairments.

Baby Sensory - provides ideas for creative play, massage, tummy time, movement, and music in simple practical ways that can be easily repeated at home. They use a combination of original and traditional songs and rhymes to develop early speech and language skills, and sensory signing activities to help you and your baby communicate from birth.

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WEIT (Wellington Early Intervention Trust) is a Wellington based trust that supports children and whanau in sessions where the parent is present along with a Physio, Early Intervention teacher, speech and language therapist, and a music therapist.

McKenzie Centre Waikato helps children from birth, or at diagnosis, to school age who have delays in their development or are at risk of developing delays. This could include children with intellectual, physical, communication and/or sensory disabilities, as well as those children with delays although no specific disability can be identified.

The Champion Centre provides multi-disciplinary early intervention services to infants and young children with significant disabilities and their families in Canterbury. The programme is offered in a centre-based model of service, in partnership with parents, and in accordance with international best practice.

Ohomairangi Trust have a dedicated team of parent educators, early intervention teachers, speech language therapists, social workers, psychologists, education support workers and child carers committed to sharing their skills and expertise in the Auckland area.

CCS Disability Action deliver Early Intervention services in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin. This involves providing holistic support services to families and children with additional education needs from the time they are born until they are settled in at school.

There are also other early intervention therapies that provide specialised support for specific disabilities like cerebral palsy, autism, hearing or vision impairment.

Some families look into alternative therapies. Research these carefully to find out what the research says about the therapy and the time and costs involved.

Every child develops at their own pace, if you are concerned about your child's development you can talk to Plunket or your GP and they can support you with this and make referrals for early intervention if applicable.

THINK REF



If you are on a neonatal journey, think REF!

Rest. Exercise. Food.

A parent's natural instinct is to put all of their focus into looking after their precious new baby. However, this can often come at the detriment of looking after yourself. Rest, Exercise and Nutrition may fall by the wayside. Taking care of yourself is especially important so you can give your baby the best possible care and attention.

We know this intuitively. Numerous studies have also shown babies do better being interacted with, read to and cuddled (etc). These are all things parents are more likely to do if they are feeling good themselves. To learn more about this, and check out our support resources, please head to

www.littlemiraclestrust.org.nz/for-parents

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