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## Growth and Development: What is Development: Principles of Development

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You must have noticed that a newborn cannot sit without support. But an infant four months old can sit with support for a minute. By nine months, most infants can sit without support for 10 minutes or longer. Similarly, in toddlers or children between one to three years, there is a marked transition in terms of a child's growth and developmental milestones. This makes us wonder how such rapid growth takes place in young children.



## What is Growth?

- The processes of growth and development go hand in hand in each individual. Growth refers to quantitative changes in the body. The main indicators of growth are increase in height, weight and changes in the body structure and body proportions. Changes continue to occur in all domains of development but changes that take place in the physical development of children become most visible and apparent.
- One of the important features of growth is that these changes are measurable. The sequence, pattern and direction of changes in growth are common to all children although the rate of growth may vary from one child to another. Growth is rapid during the first two years of life. Puberty is marked by a growth spurt i.e., relatively fast increase in height and weight in adolescents.

- Physical growth is measured by increase in height and weight at regular intervals. The height of a newborn child ranges from 47 CMS to 52 CMS. The weight can range from 2.4 kg to 3.2 kg. On an average, increment in weight is 2.0 – 2.5 kg per year. Boys tend to be heavier and taller than girls during infancy and even as toddlers. A steady increase in both height and weight is a good indicator of satisfactory physical growth. A height and weight chart is a good way of assessing health and physical development of children. Growth charts that monitor growth should be maintained regularly for all children.
- Functional development of the brain continues into adolescence. Compared to the first year, the trunk and limbs begin to grow at a faster pace during toddlerhood. When children are born, their arms appear to be longer in proportion to their legs. At birth, the legs are short and face each other. As they grow in length, they straighten out.
- During the first and second years, the height of infant's increases approximately by 40 percent and 60 - 75 percent respectively, greater than at birth. As a result of this change, the body of a child looks more proportionate than it did in the first year. This also helps children attain better balance. This pattern of growth remains the same for both boys and girls, but on an average, baby girls are slightly smaller than baby boys in size.

## What is Development?

Development refers to qualitative changes in the body as well as changes in behavior and attitude. It is difficult to measure or quantify development as these changes are not quantitative. These need to be measured in qualitative terms.

**Development is governed by certain principles. These are discussed below:**

### Principles of Development

- Development is continuous and involves change. We may or may not notice changes in body on a day-to-day basis. But these changes in body and behavioral pattern, which are indicators of development take place continuously. At times, development is rapid and at other times, it slows down.
- But it is continuous. It does not stop at any time. It is worth mentioning that changes appear not only in physical features and body structure but also in the socioemotional and cognitive development of children.
- Development is sequential. Children scribble before writing. These illustrate that there is a pattern in development. This development is sequential. All children follow more or less similar developmental patterns with one stage leading to the other. The sequential pattern of development proceeds in two directions.
- First, development proceeds from upper part of the body to the lower part of the body, i.e.. from head to toe. This head-to-toe sequence is called Cephalocaudal (Latin "head to tail" ) principle of development. This shows that development in children's head region comes first, followed by trunk region, and finally, in the leg region. This pattern helps to understand why children learn to see an object before they can control their trunk and they learn to sit before they can stand.