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.

Tips for using the guide

- Children’s Health Queensland recommends this resource be used in discussions with parents/caregivers 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!

- Partner: be your child’s partner in play. Follow their lead and wait for them to take their turn.
- Look and listen: adjust the play to your child’s level and follow their instructions.
- Add: introduce new ideas to guide, support and expand on the play your child is leading.
- 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/eddies/figures; 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!

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**Area** | **6 months** | **9 months** | **12 months** | **18 months** | **2 years** | **3 years** | **4 years** | **5 years** | **Red flags at any age**
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
**Social emotional** | Does not smile | Not sharing enjoyment with others using eye contact or facial expression | Does not notice someone new | Lacks interest in playing and interacting with others | When playing with toys tends to bang, drop or throw them rather than use them for their purpose (e.g. cut out dolls, build blocks) | No interest in pretend play or interacting with other children | Difficulty noticing and understanding feelings in themselves and others (e.g. happy, sad) | Unwilling or unable to play cooperatively | Play is different than their friends | Strong parental concerns
| Not smiling or interacting with people | Not sharing enjoyment with others using eye contact or facial expression | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | No related turn-taking games (e.g. pakeleah, rolling a ball) | Strong parental concerns

**Communication** | Not starting to babble (e.g. aahh; oohh) | Not using gestures (e.g. pointing, showing, waving) | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | No babbling phrases that sound like talking | Strong parental concerns

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**Cognition, fine motor and self care** | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Strong parental concerns

| Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Does not hold objects | Strong parental concerns


**Your local health service:**

Call 13HEALTH (13 432584) 24 hours, 7 days to speak to a Child Health Nurse.

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