

# Child Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS)

## A guide to your child's development at 4 years

Your child's development is unique. Children develop at different stages and achieve as individuals. You play an important part in your child's development, guiding and letting them explore their surroundings.

Your child at the age of 4 years is fascinated by the world around them. They are exploring, learning and expressing emotions. This is the preschool age – your child will be looking to you and other children to learn. They enjoy playing with and alongside other children, learning rules and taking turns. At this age, expect many emotional expressions, new friendships, make-believe play, an interest in numbers, tall stories, a lot of physical activity, and more.

Here are some ideas of what typical development looks like at this age and guidelines when to seek professional support. Your Child's Personal Health Record also includes some developmental information. If you have any concerns about your child's development, please seek advice from your Child and Family Health Nurse (CFHN) or General Practitioner (GP).

### What is happening at this age?

#### Talking and Understanding

- Your child's language develops a lot at this age, they are able to use 5-6 or more words in sentences and be easily understood by you and others
- At this age you might notice that your child loves telling stories and having conversations
- Your child might also tell you how they feel, talk about their ideas and "play" with language and sounds – for example use rhyming words and sounds
- Your child will be taking part in conversations and start asking lots of 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions as they try to understand more about the world
- Your child may understand more about opposites – for example, high/low
- Your child will be beginning to recognise and know names of letters and numbers and can count to 10

#### Playing and being active

- Play remains very important because it is how children learn and explore feelings
- Your child will at this age generally enjoy singing, playing, acting and make-believe play that supports their imagination. For example, your child might want to play families and take on different roles that they see in their lives – for example, doctor or shop assistant
- Your child will be enjoying being active and is getting better at walking down steps (maybe using the rail) with alternating feet, throwing, catching and kicking a ball, running, climbing, jumping, hopping and balancing on one foot. They might also develop some new gross motor skills like skipping, jumping backwards or jumping while running
- At this age, your child should find it easy to dress themselves, use a spoon and fork and sometimes a knife
- You still need to supervise and help your child just enough, but your child can go to the toilet and brush their teeth independently
- At this age your child might enjoy playing organised games with simple rules with other children

#### Social and Emotional

- Shows concern and cares for other children who are distressed
- Can tolerate separation from parent or caregiver for longer periods

## How to support your child's development at this age?

Here are some simple things you can do to help your child's development at this age:

- Remember children learn by experience and copying – modelling new skills and behaviours will help your child learn
- Encourage your child's talking, thinking and imagination by reading together out loud, telling stories, singing and reciting rhymes
- Play together and encourage your child to share by playing games taking turns. When you play, say things like, 'Now it's my turn to build the tower, then it's your turn', or 'You share the red blocks with me, and I'll share the green blocks with you'. Sharing is still hard for children at this age, so give your child lots of praise when they share
- Do some cooking together, eat and talk as a family at mealtimes
- Provide opportunities for role play and dress up to help develop your child's imagination
- Not all play needs to be structured – giving your child free playtime allows them to be creative and experience and express many different feelings (such as joy, excitement, anger and fear)
- Make time for outdoor play at a park or playground, in the backyard, on a beach or joining in a community activity. Moving around on different surfaces develops strength, balance and coordination

## When to be concerned about your child's development and what to do



**Talk to your GP or phone 1300 064 544 to speak with Child Health Nurse if you have concerns about your child's development**

For Example:

- Concern about your child's vision or a turned or lazy eye
- Concern about your child's hearing. Does your child often ask you to repeat things? Have frequent ear infections?
- Concern about how your child talks or understands what you say or is not understood by others
- Concern about how your child uses their hands or fingers to do things, for example holding a pencil or drawing a simple shape
- Concern about how your child uses their arms, legs or clumsiness - for example, difference between right and left side of body in strength, movement or tone or loose and floppy movements or stiff and tense movements
- Concern about your child's behaviour, emotions and interactions with adults or children
- Concern that your child is not interested in play with other children
- Concern that your child is not learning to do things for themselves eg dressing, eating, toileting

If you have concerns for your child's vision a local Optometrist can complete an Eye Check. Hearing tests are completed by Audiologists at hearing clinics and can be booked by parents.

**Resources:** Websites containing information on 3-4 year old behaviour, development, nutrition, play and learning, safety, sleep:

- [Preschoolers \(3-5 years\) | Raising Children Network](#)
- [Child's Development 3 to 5 years | Starting Blocks](#)
- [Kids Health Information : Fact sheets \(rch.org.au\)](#)