

Gross Motor Milestones – 4-5 years old

Gross motor skills are those which require full body movement and which involve the large muscles of the body to perform everyday functions, such as standing, walking, running, and sitting upright. It also includes eye-hand coordination skills such as ball skills (throwing, catching, kicking).

Many parents and caregivers wonder what milestones their child “should be doing” by a certain age, or “when should my child be able to do...” Although there is a wide variety of when individual children achieve a motor milestone, there are some norms used to answer these questions.

Gross Motor skills Typically Achieved by 4-5 years:

- Standing on one foot for up to 5 seconds.
- Imitating simple bilateral movements of limbs (e.g. arms up together).
- Walking up and down stairs with alternating feet.
- Climbing onto/down from furniture without assistance.
- Climbing on jungle gym and ladders.
- Pedalling a tricycle.
- Kicking a ball forward.
- Throwing a ball overarm.
- Catching a ball that has been bounced.
- Catching a ball with hands instead of using arms and body.
- Running around obstacles.
- Jumping 10 times in a row, maintaining the distance of jumps.
- Walking on tip toes.
- Walking along a line.
- Safely performing a forward roll.
- Hopping on one foot.
- Jumping over an object and landing with both feet together.

When to Intervene:

A parent or caregiver should not worry if their child is unable to do a single skill or even a couple skills by this age – as noted above there is a wide range of “normal” when it comes to developing motor skills. However, it is wise to bring it to the attention of a healthcare provider if the child is having trouble with the majority or all of these skills, is significantly older than the typical age range for development of a skill that has not been achieved, if you notice significant issues with coordination, balance and strength of the child, or if there is a significant lack of confidence and participation in most or all movement-based activities.

It is important to note that in the first 3 years of life children are able to learn motor skills because their body has become sufficiently mature. After this, new motor skills are learned through practice. Providing opportunity for children to practice motor skills in a safe and stimulating environment is key to achieving milestones.