

# Developmental Disorders in Children

## **Developmental Delay (DD)**



**Child Assessment Service**

Department of Health

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

[www.dhcas.gov.hk](http://www.dhcas.gov.hk)



## 01 What is **DD**?

Developmental delay is a condition whereby pre-school children fail to acquire the skills appropriate for their age. The delay severity varies from mild to severe.



## 02 What causes **DD**?

The cause of developmental delay is still not clearly delineated, but genetic and environmental factors are crucial among the known factors.

The congenital factors include genetic or chromosomal diseases. Pregnancy and childbirth factors include misuse of drug or excessive alcohol consumption during pregnancy, complication of birth and prematurity.

Acquired factors include infant and childhood illnesses, toxication, brain injury, encephalitis or brain trauma.

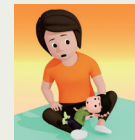
In addition, environmental factors such as parents busy at work, lack of appropriate social or language stimulation will also affect children's development.

However, the cause of developmental delay is still unknown in many children.



## 03 What are the symptoms of children with **DD**?

Children with developmental delay show delay in achieving early developmental milestones.



At six months of age, children still cannot keep their head steady or reach out with their hands to grasp objects.



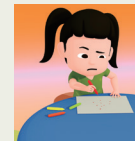
At the age of one, children cannot hold onto furniture to stand or pick up small objects with their thumb and index fingers.



At the age of one and a half, children cannot walk alone.



At the age of two, children cannot speak in single words such as "car" or "dog", or follow simple instructions, such as "Give to mummy".



At the age of two and a half, children cannot scribble with a crayon on paper, or combine words into phrases, such as "eat cake", "drink milk."



At the age of three, children cannot speak in simple sentences, such as "I want biscuit", or match basic colours and shapes.



## 04 How does **DD** affect children?



Children may show delay in one or several areas. These areas include:

- Intellectual and cognitive ability includes the ability to learn, think and solve problems.
- Language ability includes verbal comprehension, expression and speech development.
- Gross motor ability includes developmental milestones such as sitting, crawling, walking, running, and jumping, body strength, balance and limbs coordination.
- Fine motor ability includes eye-hand coordination and finger dexterity, grip strength and pre-writing skills.
- Social adaptive function refers to skills such as social and communication skills, self-care and basic daily living skills.



## 05 What is the outlook of children with **DD**?

As children reach school age, they may have communication difficulties, learning problems, and even emotional and behavioral problems. Therefore, early identification and intervention is important in addressing the developmental needs of these children and in the prevention of further impairment.



## 06 Where can parents seek help?

Parents can go to the Maternal and Child Health Centre or private practitioner for initial assessment. If necessary, referral can be made to Child Assessment Centre or Paediatric Department of hospital for further assessment. For children with developmental delay in specific areas, doctors will refer them to receive physiotherapy, occupational therapy or speech therapy.

For children with global developmental delay, they will be referred to receive pre-school rehabilitation services, including On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Service, Early Education and Training Centre, Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre, and Special Child Care Centre.





## 07 How can parents help their children with **DD**?

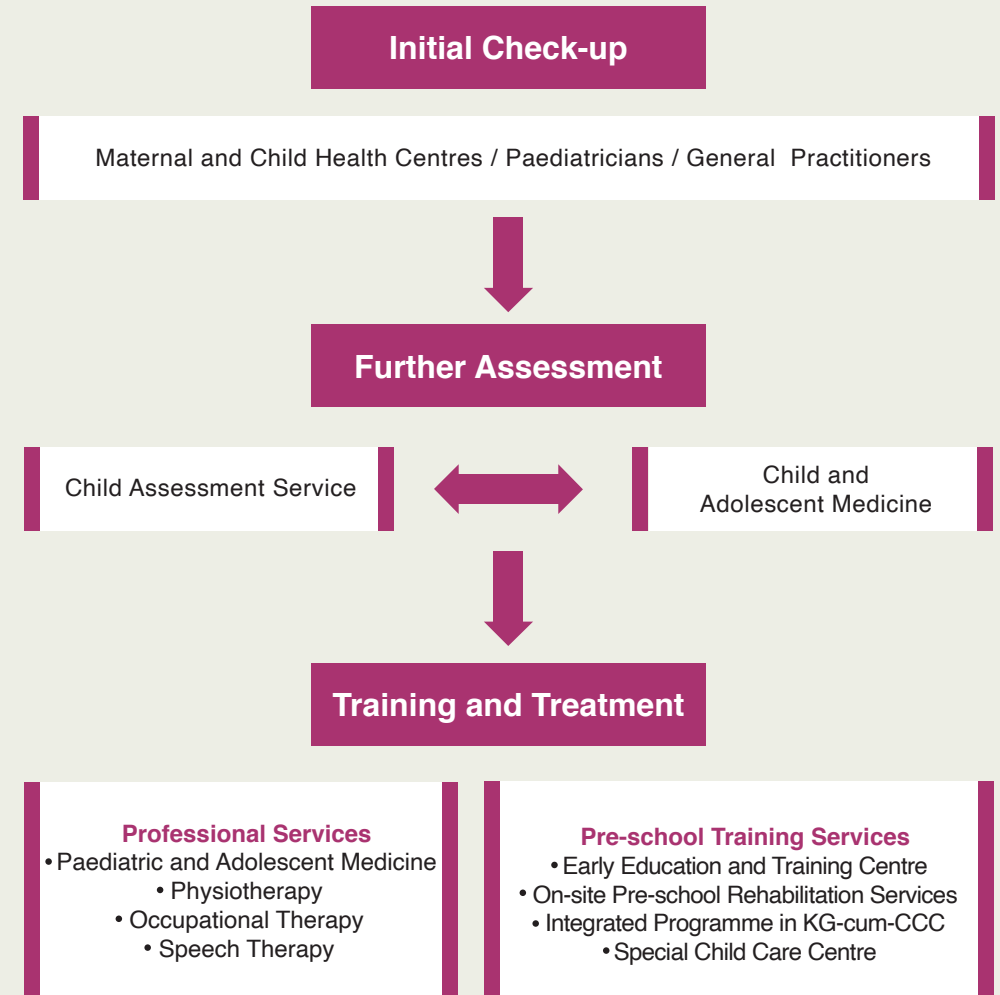
Participate in children's training as far as possible, and maintain good communication with the therapists so as to learn the training skills.



Parents can also identify their children's strength so as to enhance their self-confidence. They can also join some parent self-help groups to share their feelings with others. Parents are also encouraged to make good use of the community services to support themselves and their children.



## Referral and Management







## Related **Websites**

**Education Bureau: Integrated Education and  
Special Education information Online**

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

**Family Health Service Child Health**

[www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health\\_info/child.html](http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health_info/child.html)

**Social Welfare Department Clinical Psychological  
Services Publication**

[www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_cps/sub\\_booksbook6/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_cps/sub_booksbook6/)

**Hong Kong Education City : Inclusion Pavilion**

[www.hkedcity.net/sen](http://www.hkedcity.net/sen)



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