

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

This conversation guide offers prompts and important things to remember when discussing a baby's development with a concerned parent or caregiver.

As a healthcare professional, you know that babies develop at their own pace. However, parents and caregivers who spend a lot of time with a baby are often the first to notice abnormalities in their development and these concerns should not be overlooked. Symptoms of neuromuscular diseases (NMDs) often show in a baby's first few months of life, and any baby not reaching their key motor developmental milestones should be urgently referred to a GP.¹

Key symptoms to look out for up to 3 months of age:^{1,2}

1 Head lag



2 Hypotonia (floppiness)



3 Inability to reach



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN SPEAKING TO A CONCERNED PARENT OR CAREGIVER:

1. What is concerning you about your baby's movements?

Is your baby moving less than you would expect?
Have movements decreased recently?

2. When did you first notice something that concerned you about your baby's movements?

Babies with some NMDs may not show movements typical of young babies at 3 months of age such as waving their arms, kicking their legs, holding their heads, using their arms to push up when on their tummy and reaching out for things.

3. Does your baby have control of their head and neck?

Head control is an acquired strength that a baby usually develops in its first few months. When your baby is picked up, can they support their head, or are they beginning to raise their head? How long can they support their head for?

4. How does your baby move when on their tummy?

Laying a baby on their tummy shows how much muscle strength they have in their neck and shoulders. Do you do regular tummy time with your baby? What happens when you put your baby on their tummy?

5. How is your baby feeding?

In some cases of NMD, babies may struggle with feeding, specifically latching and suckling, and can sometimes cough or choke when swallowing.

Notes:

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References: 1. McDonald CM. *Phys Med Rehabil Clin N Am.* 2012;23(3):495–563. 2. ThinkGP. Paediatric neuromuscular disorders - what are they, and how can early diagnosis help? Available at: <https://www.thinkgp.com.au/blog/paediatric-neuromuscular-disorders-what-are-they-and-how-can-early-diagnosis-help>. Accessed: July 2023.