

## Your Child's Developing Years

Research on early brain development between conception and age six, shows us the types of activities that promotes child development and improves behaviour, learning and health over their lifetime (McCain & Mustard, 1999). You as parents have the ability to monitor your child's development, identify any potential problems and access appropriate programs and services to ensure the best outcomes for your child.

### **Did you know 90% of brain growth happens from birth to 5 years of age?**

As infants grow into toddlers, they learn increasingly difficult skills like speech, crawling, walking and how to play with others. These developing skills or milestones occur at predictable times over this period of growth. Although it is important for parents to monitor their child's ongoing development during their earliest years, the 18 months period is a crucial time to review their progress.

### **Why is 18 Months an Essential Age to check your child's development?**

- Your child starts to speak so it is possible to detect early speech problems
- Your child becomes more assertive and independent so parents may have questions about managing their behaviour
- Early detection for some disorders such as autism is possible
- It is the last scheduled immunization appointment with your doctor before your child is school age

A public health nurse from the **Health Babies Healthy Children Program** is available to review your child's development as well as provide anticipatory guidance on such issues as nutrition, parenting, safety, literacy and toilet learning information at Parent and Baby drop-in sites throughout Lambton County. The Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS), a parent checklist, is used to review your child's abilities as well as provide parents an opportunity to address any concerns or questions about their child's development. The NDDS covers development related to vision, hearing, communication, gross and fine motor skills, and social/emotional growth. A public health nurse also assists parents in making connections with other community resources if developmental concerns are identified.

The **Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program** is a provincially-funded program for parents of children aged zero to six years of age. The program is free and is designed to help all babies and new parents get the best possible start in life. See the website for the services offered by HBHC: [http://www.lambtonhealth.on.ca/child/HB\\_HC.asp](http://www.lambtonhealth.on.ca/child/HB_HC.asp)

The **Ready Set Grow....Preschool Checkpoint** is also available to children 18 months to 4 years of age. These multidisciplinary checkpoints are available throughout Lambton County and review your child's development, speech and language, motor skills, early literacy, as well as provide information on the immunizations, Ontario Early Years and Best Start Programs and Resources. See available dates and location also under Parent Resources.

Your **physician or primary care provider** offers your child a well baby checkup at regular times during their growth. Parents who complete a Nipissing District Developmental Screen before their child's checkup have the opportunity of asking questions related to any developmental issues identified on the screen. It is important your child receives an enhanced 18 month well baby checkup that ensures your child receives a comprehensive visit that looks at the child's growth and development, receive their immunizations as well as offers parents support and advice about your child. These checkups also provide an opportunity for families to connect to other child programs and services within the community.

**Take time to check your child's development....because the early years matter.**

For any further questions or concerns about your child's development contact Children's Services at 519 383-8331 to speak to a public health nurse.

**Available Resources:**

- Nipissing District Developmental Screens (NDDS) @ [www.ndds.ca](http://www.ndds.ca)
- Your Child's Developing Years (see brochure)