

Is it time for your Child's Developmental check-up?

Dentists, Doctors, Optometrists, immunizations are all places we take our children starting at a very early age to ensure that they are growing and developing in a healthy way. We know that all of these aspects are important for healthy growth and development in order for our children to be happy, healthy and continue to develop to their fullest potential. All of these preventative measures we take are important but there is a piece that is often missed that is just as important to monitor as a parent. That is the overall development of our children. Research shows that the first five years in a child's life are the most important time as this sets the stage for success in school and later life. There are many new skills and experiences that a child learns in the first five years. It is important to monitor development to ensure that a child is learning all of the needed skills to be successful once they reach school.

So where would you take your child to receive their developmental check up? Parent Link Centers across Alberta provide developmental check ups through the use of a tool called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire which is available for children from the ages of 4 months to 5 years of age. The parent completes this questionnaire which looks at five areas of development including communication, fine motor, gross motor, personal social and problem solving and takes approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. Once the questionnaire is completed a trained professional will score the questionnaire and go over the results with the parent to identify a child's area of strengths. If there are any identified areas where a child may need some extra supports, the parent would be connected with appropriate services.

March is developmental check up month and Family Services of Central Alberta Parent Link is offering free developmental check ups on March 11, 18, and 25 between 9:00 am – 12:00 am at 5409-50 Ave. This is an opportunity for families with children between 4 months and 5 years of age to drop in and complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Families will be entered for a family fun pack that will be drawn on March 25.

The Alberta government recognizes the benefits to universal developmental check ups and in an effort to provide this service to Albertans is piloting four three year projects. These projects are aimed at providing developmental check ups and services for children needing extra supports to meet developmental milestones. David Thompson Health Region in Partnership with Family Services of Central Alberta, and Mountainview and Evergreen Parent Link are piloting an exciting project called Growing Together.

The Growing Together Project offers developmental screening (developmental check ups) for children between the ages of 18 – 26 months in Red Deer, Olds and Rocky Mountain House through immunization clinics, Home visitation Programs, Pediatric Rehab, and community developmental check up days like the days mentioned in this article, along with enhancement of current services for children that may need additional supports to meet developmental milestones. Every child deserves a healthy start.

For any questions regarding this article please contact Trina Kennedy, Growing Together Group Coordinator at 403.309.5648.