

Make the First Five Years Count: What Parents Should Know

(NAPS)—The first five years of life are the years of learning that shape kids' futures. Yet every year, more than 1 million children with unidentified delays and disabilities enter school with learning and health issues that put them far behind their peers.

According to the National Survey of Children's Health, one in five households with children has a child with a special health care need and could benefit from screening and services, yet less than 20 percent of children under the age of 5 receive a developmental screening.

While every child develops at his or her own pace, there are some milestones parents should be aware of. Easter Seals, through the generous support of the CVS Caremark Charitable Trust, offers parents free access to an online screening tool to help parents monitor their child's developmental milestones. Widely used with parents by health care providers, preschool programs and early childhood professionals, Brookes Publishing's *Ages & Stages Questionnaires*® can now be easily completed by parents at www.MakeTheFirstFiveCount.org.

Here are a few of the milestones included in the screening tool:

Birth to 1 year

- At 2 months, does your baby smile when you talk to her? Does your baby roll from his back to his tummy at 8 months?

- When holding a small toy in each hand, does your baby clap the toys together (like 'Pat-a-cake') at 12 months?

1 to 2 years

- At 14 months, does your baby take several steps without tripping or falling?

- Does your child help turn the pages of a book at 16 months?



Is your child at risk? Use an online screening tool at MakeTheFirstFiveCount.org to find out.

- When you ask your child to point to her nose, eyes, hair, feet, ears and so forth, does she correctly point to at least seven body parts?

2 to 3 years

- Does your child run fairly well, stopping herself without bumping into things or falling? Does your child put on a coat, jacket or shirt by himself?

- When drawing, does your child hold a pencil, crayon or pen between her fingers and thumb like an adult does?

3 to 4 years

- Can your child cut paper with child-safe scissors? If you place five objects in front of your child, can he count them by saying, "one, two, three, four, five," in order?

4 to 5 years

- Does your child use four- and five-word sentences?

- Does your child usually take turns and share with other children?

If something doesn't feel quite right, share your concerns with your health care provider. Early identification and treatment are keys to a bright future for your child.

These questions are just some of the helpful items in the *Ages & Stages Questionnaires*®, Third Edition (© 2009 Brookes Publishing Co., used with permission).