

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Definition

Global developmental delay (GDD) is defined as significant delays in 2 or more developmental “domains” including: gross or fine motor skills, speech/language, cognitive, social skills, and activities of daily living. It is a term generally used in children less than 5 years of age and is often thought to predict a future diagnosis of intellectual disability (ID). The diagnosis of ID is generally made in children over 5 years of age when testing of IQ and developmental skills become more reliable.

Causes

There are many causes of GDD:

- Genetic causes eg. missing or extra chromosomes, Fragile X syndrome, Rett syndrome
- Brain abnormalities
- Metabolic disorders
- Prenatal/perinatal factors eg. Prematurity, lack of oxygen, infections
- In up to half of the cases, no cause can be determined.

Assessments

Often, your pediatrician will want to gather more information about your child’s development by getting formal assessments of their skills. There are a number of different health care professionals that may be involved:

- Physiotherapist (PT) - assess and provide support for gross motor skills (larger movements like crawling, walking, running)



- Occupational therapist (OT) - assess and provide support for fine motor skills (smaller movements involving the hands)
- Speech/language pathologist (SLP) - assess and provide support for speech and language skills
- Psychologists - assess and provide support for cognitive skills, emotional/behavioural concerns
- Audiologist - tests hearing
- Optometrist/ophthalmologist - tests vision

Investigations

Your pediatrician may recommend testing to try to determine the cause of your child's developmental delays. These tests may include:

- Blood tests, including for genetic or metabolic disorders
- Brain imaging

Management

- Regardless of the cause of GDD, the most important thing is that your child gets all the support they need to continue to learn and develop their skills. This usually involves a team working together including your pediatrician and some of the therapists listed above (PT, OT, SLP). There are many resources in Calgary that can be very helpful in providing support.