



# CULTURE in CONTEXT

## MOTOR DEVELOPMENT



Motor milestones such as rolling, sitting, crawling, and walking are a major topic in early childhood development, particularly in a child's first year. While some believe that all children need to reach these milestones at the same age, the cultural context can have a huge impact on the way that young children move. Here are some things to consider as you talk with families about early childhood motor development.

**1. Position:** Many early childhood providers emphasize tummy time, avoiding bouncers, and other positioning education to promote certain movements in young children. It is important to remember that not all cultures put infants on the floor. In some cultures, infants are primarily carried or kept up off the floor until they are older. While these positions may impact the times at which infants learn movements like crawling, they have not been shown to prevent children from developing normally.

**2. Patience:** Some cultural values, such as use of baby equipment, furniture, and even ways parents hold children may make a child's development look different than others. In most cases, patience and a focus on rich parent-child interactions will still lead to typical outcomes long-term. If you are worried that a child's development may indicate a developmental diagnosis or other concern, begin by learning more about the family's culture and priorities. You may be able to discover whether other children in this culture develop similarly or what opportunities may be available to promote movement in a way that honors family values.

**3. Participation:** While the specific type of movements children develop can be heavily impacted by position, participation is possible in any position. Instead of focusing on a specific type of crawling, for instance, think about how the experience of mobility helps infants participate and brainstorm with families about what that participation can look like in their family culture.



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