

My Child Isn't Crawling...Should I Be Concerned?

Crawling is often a baby's first method for getting around efficiently and independently. Developing the skill of crawling is expected between the ages of 7 and 10 months; however, some children achieve this milestone outside of this age range or skip it all together. With either one of these situations, parents may ask, should I be concerned?

Currently there is debate in the medical community regarding how important it is for children to crawl. Some believe that crawling is critical for developing a strong muscular foundation for more advanced skills and performing daily tasks at an older age. While others believe that a child skipping this milestone should not be concerning until more research is established showing the long term impact on development. Regardless of whether or not crawling is essential, experts agree that crawling can be extremely beneficial.

What are the benefits of crawling?

- **Helps develop core muscle strength:** a child must activate their core muscles to fight gravity and keep their spine in a neutral position.
- **Provides strengthening for the arms and shoulders:** weight bearing through the arms requires constant activation of muscles at their hands, wrists, elbows, and shoulders and gives children the opportunity to develop strength and endurance at several joints at once.
- **Increases hip stability:** a child must activate the muscles around their pelvis to tuck their legs underneath them and keep them there, which is essential for standing and walking.
- **Improves postural stability and head control:** stimulates postural muscles in the upper back and neck which supports a child engaging with his or her environment in a variety of positions.
- **Promotes coordination and body awareness:** give a child opportunity to build coordination of using arms and legs in a reciprocal manner, which is essential for walking, going up and down stairs, and even riding a tricycle or bicycle.

How can I encourage my child to crawl?

- Spend lots of time on the tummy! Place a ball or toy out of reach to encourage your child to problem solve in order to get it
- Encourage your child to position on hands and knees while playing – if your child has trouble maintaining this position, elevate the surface their hands rest on to make it easier!
- Put pillows, cushions, legs, or any other low obstacle in between your child and an item of interest to encourage them to move their body up and over it
- Go up and down stairs on hands and knees
- Have your baby play with siblings or other children who are crawling
- Pretend to be cats and dogs
- Set up a tunnel for your child to go through

If you have additional concerns or the above information is not enough to help, seek advice from a pediatric physical therapist who can provide you with more specific recommendations.