

RED FLAGS:
Recognizing Social and Communication Problems In Infants & Toddlers

By, Judith Aronson-Ramos, M.D.

This list briefly describes behaviors and characteristics of concern in young children which may be a sign of a more significant problem. Many times it is not an isolated or rare behavior that is a concern, *but a pattern or constellation of behaviors that are frequent and prevent the child from engaging in other activities.*

- No social smile and back and forth exchanges with caregivers by 2-3 months.
- No notice of when caregivers leave or enter a room by 6-9 months of age.
- Not responding to his or her name when called once or twice at nine months or later.
- Lacking in back and forth play with teachers, caregivers or other children. We call this skill, joint attention, and it is a critical component of engaging with others.
- No pointing or babbling at nine months or later.
- No functional words at 15 months or later.
- Repetitive and non-purposeful play – dumping toys, lining things up, stacking – at the expense of creative and imaginative use of objects.
- Limited or no eye contact.
- Repetitive body movements or posturing – can be hand flapping, finger twisting, spinning, rocking - all of these are done to an excessive degree.
- Unable to be redirected at 15 months or later due to an intense fixation with an object or interest; we sometimes call this “sticky attention”.
- Unable to sit or engage in expected activities for age from 12 months on.
- Prolonged difficulties with separation from caregivers, or extreme upset at changes in routine.
- Viewing or inspecting objects from unusual angles – laying down to look at spinning wheels or objects, using peripheral vision, fixating on moving objects that are not toys such as fans, wheels, washing machines, etc. All of these things are done to excess not just in an exploratory way.
- Not comprehending instructions, directions, or tasks that are clearly age appropriate.

For more information on red flags visit www.firstsigns.org