

General movement assessment (GMA)

Identifying babies at risk for developmental problems

General movement patterns

For the first 3 months, all babies have shaky and jerky movements of their arms and legs. Most of these movements are reflexes or are involuntary – meaning your baby has no control over them.



Baby stretching and moving

General movement problems:

The quality of these different movement patterns show how well the brain is working.

- Any noted change in a movement pattern may show a possible neurological problem such as cerebral palsy or other developmental disabilities.
- Injuries to the baby's developing brain can cause changes in any of these movement patterns.

Babies at risk for movement problems

- Mothers with complications during pregnancy
- Premature babies
- Babies with problems during birth
- Babies with problems after birth

By screening these infants, we can identify possible movement problems. With early diagnosis and therapy, your baby's quality of life can be much better.

General movement assessment video

To assess the different movement patterns, a trained physical or occupational therapist (PT or OT) will take a 3 to 5 minute video while your baby is awake, calm, and lying on their back.

No distractions during filming

It is important to film your baby's spontaneous movements, without any stimulation. During the video we will remove all toys, pacifiers, music, and bright lights. We will also avoid interacting with your baby while filming.

Assessment

A team of trained therapists (PT/OT), a doctor, and a nurse practitioner look closely at the video. They look at the way your baby is moving their arms, legs, body, and head, and give each type of movement a score.



It is important for you to understand that an abnormal movement pattern does not mean that your baby has a movement problem, such as cerebral palsy.

An abnormal movement pattern places your baby at a higher risk for developing movement disabilities or cerebral palsy in the future.

Follow-up

A member of our team will explain your baby's general movement score. If your baby is at a higher risk for developing future movement problems:

- We may schedule another video before you go home or at a developmental follow-up appointment.
- Depending on your baby's score, we may refer you to our NICU developmental follow-up clinic (NEST Clinic) after you go home.

These instructions are only general guidelines. Your healthcare provider may give you special instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call your healthcare provider.