

Don't despair over your late walking baby

Children are like jigsaw puzzles and we don't have the picture on a box to know what they're supposed to look like. We don't see a late walking baby. But with babies we're not even sure we have all the pieces.

Aaron is a late walker, or as our Dr. Cao calls him, "very normal." By now we should all be aware of the [perils of early walking](#), but there's something in us that wants our child to be the first in all regards. We all have those friends with a child walking at 10 months, and we're envious because they seem so advanced for their age. Every day I watch my boy brace himself against a wall and carefully stand against it. He'll take a few steps against the wall, even turning out so that his hands are in the air. But as quick as that he goes forward for his first walk, he toddles backward before catching himself in a butt plant. He's capable of standing unassisted but has yet to walk.

My child's method for learning to walk is like he's eating his first grapefruit everyday. First, he has to break through the skin and take a couple of bites to get used to the taste. Just as he begins to enjoy the taste, it squirts him in the eye.

Fear is the root of the problem for most late walkers

As most parents know, a newborn has no fear and remains that way for many months. But just as babies begin to crawl, [new research](#) suggests that infants begin developing their avoidance instincts. When infants develop experience with mobility for the first time, they are keying into the visual information that helps them navigate. The fear of heights, for instance, comes more from the inability to process the results of encountering space that cannot be traversed. In other words, babies that are less apt to explore their environment vertically are doing so because they are more concerned about the consequences of their actions. So, don't despair over your late walking baby – your baby is smarter because of it.

Early standing does not mean an early walker

We thought our baby was going to be an early walker because of his early instinct to stand. But standing and walking are unrelated, and children often stand due to what are called [primitive reflexes](#), involuntary movements that has to do with the neurological functions of the brain. But after many months of standing with confidence, our baby learned to crawl and everything changed. Suddenly, crawling was the innovation our baby needed to cancel out all other forms of mobility. In fact, he's so adept at crawling he's taking fewer steps against the wall in an effort to experiment with walking.

Babies don't need your help to walk

Babies need to know that they are appreciated and given the room to grow on their own terms. Generally, they never need parents help with walking unless it's a fun game for them to play. Respect to make mistakes and move at their own pace is important above all. A late walking baby is working out his or her own system for evolving to that next phase in their young life.

Other reasons a late walking baby is a smarter baby include more common reasoning such as physical readiness and peer pressure.

Safety

As we said before, a baby is learning about spatial dimensions as quickly as they are evolving their skill sets. Children should be encouraged to conquer their fears on their own accord.

Walking changes their play

Moving to a vertical world means that crawling around on the floor will be lost. While there is much to be learned up in the world, there are also many caveats to creative play that are lost once the child moves around standing. There's more to be learned down low than up high.

Self confidence

Children learn self-confidence through trial and error. Their independent accomplishments are more likely to be nurtured when the progression of skills is a gradual one. Over confidence can come from early walking. Modesty is gained through patience and learning.

Restrictiveness comes with walking

Although we think a walking baby is liberated, in fact walking restricts them from other types of play. Taking time in each phase of life is key to core physical, psychological and emotional intelligence. A smart baby knows that late walking is right on time.

Parents should not despair over their late walking baby any more than they should worry about other milestones not being reached. Unless there's a serious physical impairment, children will learn to walk when they're ready. Your stressing over it certainly won't help.

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