

C **IN OUR** COMMUNITY

What's happening on the North Shore that affects our young children?

PATHWAYS CENTER: A STATE-OF-THE-ART PEDIATRIC THERAPY CENTER IN GLENVIEW

by Gay Girolami

At Pathways Center, we believe that every child deserves a future filled with promise. Pathways is a state-of-the-art, not-for-profit pediatric therapy center located in Glenview, with a staff of highly trained and dedicated physical, occupational, and speech therapists who provide intervention to hundreds of area children and their families. Pathways promotes functional independence, social and emotional well-being, and integration into the community.

A unique approach to pediatric therapy

Since 1985, Pathways has helped over 15,000 infants and children learn to eat, sit, walk, communicate, play, and move with greater independence, enabling them to more fully integrate into their homes, schools, and communities. We provide therapy for a variety of conditions, including autism and autistic spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, feeding/swallowing, communication and sensory integration challenges, as well as treatment for sports injuries.

Our family-centered approach to therapy means we welcome the family as part of the team, soliciting parents' expectations for their child and meeting with families to discuss their child's progress and to set goals. We stay on the cutting-edge of developments in the field by undertaking clinical research that adds to the body of knowledge about the benefits of pediatric therapy and assists us in evaluating our interventions.

Crucial infant milestones

Pathways treats children of all ages, including the youngest infants. Parents may not realize that their very young infants can

benefit from therapy, and we seek to educate them about the value of early intervention and therapy. We are aided in this effort by our sister organization, Pathways Awareness Foundation, a national non-profit dedicated to raising awareness among parents and medical professionals about the benefit of therapy for infants with early motor delays.

An estimated 400,000 babies born each year are at risk for some form of neuromuscular condition, ranging from nonspecific low muscle tone to cerebral palsy. Yet a national survey by Pathways Awareness Foundation revealed that only a third of parents can identify the three month infant milestones, and 95% would not seek medical help if their child wasn't reaching these milestones. Medical evidence shows that children who receive early therapeutic intervention benefit greatly, helping them lead a fuller, more active life.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has specific milestones for infant development, which are the cornerstone of our outreach efforts. (See box at right). Although parents may be more aware of physical milestones, they should also be alert to delays in their child's social, speech, and play development: hand to the other; reaches both hands to play with feet

Learn more

To find out more about Pathways Center or to schedule an appointment for a free screening, call 847-729-6220 or visit www.pathwayscenter.org.

To learn more about infant milestones and early warning signs of delay, visit www.pathwaysawareness.org.

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MILESTONES OF INFANT DEVELOPMENT

Three months

- Can push up on forearms
- Can lift and hold head up in tummy lying
- Sucks and swallows well during feeding
- Quiets or smiles in response to sound or voice
- Coos or vocalizes other than crying
- Turns head toward direction of sound
- Visually tracks a moving toy from side to side
- Attempts to reach for a rattle held above chest
- Keeps head in the middle to watch faces or toys

Six months

- Can use hands to support self in sitting
- Rolls from back to tummy
- Can entirely support weight with the legs while standing
- Begins to use consonant sounds in babbling, e.g., "dada"
- Uses babbling to get attention
- Begins to eat cereals and pureed foods
- Reaches for a nearby toy while on tummy
- When on back, transfers toy from one hand to the other; reaches both hands to play with feet

Nine months

- Sits and reaches for toys without falling
- Moves from tummy or back into sitting
- Creeps on hands and knees with alternate arm and leg movement
- Increases variety of sounds and syllable combinations in babbling
- Looks at familiar objects and people when named
- Begins to eat junior and mashed table foods
- In a high chair, holds and drinks from bottle
- Explores and examines an object using both hands
- Turns several pages of a chunky (board) book at once
- In simple play, imitates others

Twelve months

- Pulls to stand and cruises along furniture
- Stands alone and takes several independent steps
- Meaningfully uses "mama" or "dada"
- Responds to simple commands, e.g. "come here"
- Produces long strings of gibberish in social communication
- Begins to use an open cup
- Finger feeds self
- Releases objects into a container with a large opening
- Uses thumb and pointer finger to pick up tiny objects

Fifteen months

- Walks independently and seldom falls
- Squats to pick up a toy
- Has vocabulary of 5-10 words
- Imitates new less familiar words
- Understands 50 words
- Increases variety of coarsely chopped table foods
- Stacks two objects or blocks
- Helps with getting undressed
- Holds and drinks from cup

- from the American Academy of Pediatrics