



FOLLOW-UP OF (VERY) PRETERM BORN CHILDREN: WHY, WHAT, WHEN AND HOW?



Follow-up aims at identifying children in need for individualised support or therapy provided by different professional groups e.g. physicians, physiotherapists and speech therapists.



Developmental problems may change with age stages: only regular follow-up allows to determine which interventions a child needs.



Follow-up starts with discharge planning and provides clear information about any risk factors for developmental problems and disorders.

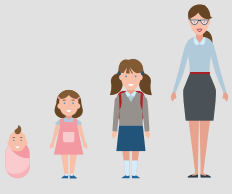


Preterm born children are at risk for a variety of light to severe developmental challenges: the availability of diverse screening methods for different abilities and multidisciplinary follow-up teams are the key to ensure appropriate continuing care.


This is a selection of the most important areas of follow-up, but of course other topics might be of interest depending on the child's health status.

WHAT


Growth




Hearing




Motor and neurological function and coordination




Mental development (emotional and attention problems)



Speech, language and communication



Visual function



WHEN

Continuously



In the first month of age



3-6 months, 1 and 2 years, before schooling



2 years, before schooling



2 years, before schooling



3.5-4 years, before schooling



HOW

Measurement of height, weight and head circumference



With a **non-invasive** screening device the healthcare professional measures the reaction of the brain towards a specific tone to judge the capability of hearing.



In babies the healthcare professional observes **age-specific and spontaneous fluent movements** of the whole body e.g. of the arms, legs and the neck. Older children are asked to perform playful and fun activities like playing with building blocks or catching a ball.



Usually, parents are asked to answer specific and easy questions about their **child's behaviour** in daily life and social and emotional well-being.



To test what the child says and understands, gesturing, and vocabulary as well as **developmental milestones**, such as correct spelling of more difficult phone connections like bl-, br-, kl-, gl-, **checklists** are used.



The child's visual acuity and position of eyes are **screened by ophthalmologists** using special devices, e.g. eye-charts with symbols (house, apple, ring, heart) getting smaller from top to bottom.



Every preterm born child develops individually: follow-up shall identify tailored support taking into account the individual circumstances. Thus, follow-up does not aim at meeting the "norm" but to help with any kind of care needed.

The infographic makes no claim to completeness.