

# Growing up, when does it happen for children with special needs?



Image credit: Adobe Stock

**Summary:** As a parent of a child with special needs, you may be caught up in day to day survival. You may ask, “How can I think about tomorrow when I’m just trying to make it through today?” When you can catch your breath, it is helpful to be aware of future transitions and allow yourself to think about the future.

## Introduction

Children and families go through many changes as they grow up. These times of change are often called transitions. Children face change when they enter kindergarten, when they become a teen, and later when they become an adult. Starting a new program, working with new agencies and care providers, and making new friends are just some of the changes that lie ahead. To get ready for these changes, planning must start early, be real and positive with shared expectations and hope for the future.

As a parent of a child with special needs, you may be caught up in day to day survival. You may ask, “How can I think about tomorrow when I’m just trying to make it through today?” When you can catch your breath, it is helpful to be aware of those transitions and allow yourself to think about the future.

## Tips for Parents

Here are suggestions and tips that might help you and your family start thinking about the future. They will give you ideas to help your child become more independent with their health care and other areas of life. All children should be encouraged to do their personal best. Although children’s abilities will vary, do not underestimate them. As a parent, have expectations for your child and encourage your child to expect the best from themselves.

### Parenting

- Give your child choices so they learn to make decisions
- Teach your child the consequences of their behaviors and choices

### Social

- Get involved in community activities that include children with and without special needs
- Talk with parents of children with and without special needs
- Take your child to playgrounds, parks and playgroups

### Self-Care

- Teach your child everyday skills like brushing their teeth
- Teach your child self care skills related to their special needs
- Give your child chores that match their abilities

#### Education

- When registering your child for school, request a case conference to best plan your child's educational and health needs
- Keep a record of your child's education history

#### Medical

- Develop good working relationships with doctors and health care providers
- Keep a record of your child's medical history
- Teach your child what their disability is called
- Teach your child about their special needs

## About this Document

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Written by the Eastern Ontario Health Unit ([www.eohu.ca](http://www.eohu.ca)).

Adapted from: A timetable for Growing Up, When Does It Happen? Life Skills Institute, Bloorview Kids Rehab, Toronto, Ontario.

## Disclaimer

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Information in this fact sheet may or may not apply to your child. Your health care provider is the best source of information about your child's health.

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