

Red Flags for Infant and Toddler Mental Health Issues For BABIES

1. Body function alterations especially with effortful, challenging or stressful events.
 - a. Gastrointestinal issues such gagging, vomiting or retching; constipation; frequent diarrhea; defecating when surprised or stressed; symptoms of reflux.
 - b. Breathing issues such as fast breathing, breath holding or turning very red or dusky.
 - c. Lack of regularity or typical frequency in urinating or defecating.
 - d. Frequent visits to the urgent care, emergency department or pediatricians office other than regularly scheduled visits.
2. Arousal and sleep problems
 - a. Not sleeping much or sleeping in very short bouts
 - b. Frequent waking with or without stimulation
 - c. Nightmares/night terrors/night wandering
 - d. Parents not getting enough sleep
3. Body movement (motor involvement)
 - a. Quick to startle
 - b. Frequent or continuous tremors and/or jitteriness
 - c. Becoming still without attending to what is going on.
 - d. Significant activity that is hard to modify with typical means
 - e. Frequent accidental injuries due to clumsiness such as falling, bumping their head, bone breaks.
4. Interaction with others and affect
 - a. Flat affect or overly happy
 - b. Avoidance of eye contact with familiar people
 - c. Engages/overly friendly with everyone (e.g., hugs to strangers, sits on strangers lap or seeks affection from people indiscriminately)
 - d. Looks sad most of the time
 - e. Doesn't play as other children their age would
 - f. Irritability with interaction
 - g. Doesn't enjoy activities he/she used to enjoy
 - h. Parents position child facing away from them for interactions or feeding.
 - i. Difficulty separating from familiar caregiver
 - j. Prolonged screaming/tantrums at separation that persist despite efforts to comfort
 - k. No or minimal reaction to separating from familiar caregiver when in a new/strange environment
 - l. Parents afraid they will go with a stranger

5. Eating problems
 - a. Gorging on food
 - b. Eating non food items such as dust, dirt, plastics, paper
 - c. Not gaining weight in spite of eating enough
 - d. Persistent food refusals
 - e. Gagging, vomiting, or other atypical responses to ingesting food
 - f. Parent frustration with eating problems
 - g. Grazing throughout the day
 - h. Difficulty establishing typical eating routines despite consistency in caregiving
 - i. Rigid eating patterns (e.g., only eating one kind of food, refusing a meal if something smells, looks or feels “bad”, not allowing different foods to touch/be mixed together)
6. Self soothing and irritability which includes
 - a. Difficult to console with ordinary interventions
 - b. Irritability doesn't match the situation
 - c. Tantrums that aren't easily controlled
 - d. Pervasive irritability regardless of environment/situation
 - e. Prolonged irritability lasting well after event ends
 - f. Inability to calm with typical interventions such as pacifier, hands to mouth, swaddling.
 - g. Inability to go to sleep by self without rocking, holding or parental presence,
7. Parental engagement
 - a. Flat affect
 - b. Don't respond to baby's cries/requests or social bids for attention (e.g., smiling, cooing, bringing a toy/book over)
 - c. Too intrusive
 - d. Discipline punitive
 - e. Negative interpretation of typical behaviors
 - f. Attribution of adult characteristics/motives to young child behaviors (e.g., “manipulative”)

Red Flags for Infant and Toddler Mental Health Issues For Caregivers

Body Function Issues:

- a. Unexplained pain or sensitive areas of the body
- b. Shortness of breath or rapid breathing
- c. Difficulty with digestion or elimination

Arousal and Sleep:

- a. Inability to sleep more than 1-2 hours at a time
- b. Frequent nightmares or flashbacks
- c. Lack of focus, distraction during interactions

Body Movement:

- a. Lack of motivation to exercise
- b. Unexplained muscle aches and pains

Interaction with others:

- a. Unexplained anger that affects care of the baby or of relationships with family members
- b. Lack of enjoyment in caring for the baby
- c. Frequent feelings of hopelessness or sadness

Eating:

- a. Unexplained weight loss or gain
- b. Lack of appetite

Soothing/Self Regulation:

- a. Irritability for no apparent reason
- b. Difficulty calming down in order to rest
- c. Typical strategies for calming are not working