Physical Activity Tips to Do with Your Child

18 months to 2 1/2 years
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

for a healthy development

You are probably fully aware of the fact that your child needs exercise to stay in good health. Children who get adequate physical activity are more even-tempered, sleep better and have a healthier appetite. Play and physical activity boost their self-confidence and help them express their emotions and build relationships. Research has shown that children who engage in physical activity are more skilful and sustain fewer injuries. Regular physical activity is good for their bones, heart and body weight and promotes learning (e.g. during language acquisition).

Children need exercise

Children seldom sit still for very long, and you might think that that’s enough physical activity. In point of fact, children’s physical condition has deteriorated in recent years. This is largely inadvertent and mainly a result of our modern lifestyle: Our days are busy, we walk and cycle less, we sit for long periods, surrounding ourselves with screens (TVs, smartphones, etc.), and our environment is less suited to physical activity (parks that are far away, dangerous roads, neighbours who are sensitive to noise). But children have a natural urge to move, and even simple activities are beneficial.

How can you support your child?

The suggestions on the following pages are intended to help you support the development of your child’s motor skills in day-to-day life. Use your – and your child’s – imagination to supplement these ideas.
Physical activity helps me to...

... develop strength and dexterity

... build my self-confidence

My parents can help me by:

» allowing me to do things by myself (get dressed, tidy up, etc.)
» encouraging me to walk (instead of sitting in the buggy)
» listening to me and taking me seriously
» setting rules and boundaries
» providing me with a safe environment

... engage in uninterrupted play

... express myself

... learn my limits and avoid injuries
QUIET ACTIVITIES

Everyone goes to bed
At bedtime, allow your child to put their dolls to bed or park their toy cars in the garage.

variation
From time to time, your child’s favourite stuffed animal can help, too.

Cat and Mouse
Hide under the covers.
Can your child find your body underneath?

variation
Switch roles or let your child guess which part of your body they have discovered.

The Little Sculptor
Has your child ever played with play dough?
Explore all the things you can make together.

variation
Make animals or things together to feed your child’s imagination and stimulate their fine motor skills.
IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Roll the ball

Roll a ball back and forth between the two of you.

variation
Throw a ball back and forth while standing outside.

What animal am I?

Imitate animals (tiger, rabbit, horse, turtle, etc.) by copying their sounds and movements (jumping, crawling, etc.).

variation
Pretend the animal is expressing different types of emotions, such as happiness, sadness or anger.

Obstacle course

Build an obstacle course with your child in the living room using chairs, tables, pillows, boxes, etc.
BAD-WEATHER ACTIVITIES

Let’s dance
Turn on the radio or play some music that makes you want to get up and dance with your child.

variation
Counting rhymes accompanied with gestures can help your child learn to talk.

Playing car
Hold your child’s hands and pretend to be a car that’s turning the corners.

variation
Use your fingers to mimic the various levers (start button, horn, indicator, etc.).

Into the great outdoors
Dress your child in a raincoat and wellies and go for a walk.

variation
Help your child discover new things: Guide them across various surfaces or over a fallen tree trunk.
WEARING THEM OUT

At the playground
Encourage your child to climb and slide and play with other children. Stay nearby and make sure they don’t get hurt.

variation
Practise kicking a ball with your child and chase after it together.

Building a tower
Build a tower out of shoe boxes (or something similar) with your child. They will have fun toppling it, rebuilding it and toppling it again.

Mosquito bites
Go outside and pretend to be a mosquito. Chase after your child so you can catch them, “bite” them and tickle them.

variation
Switch roles.
RECOMMENDATIONS

You can find informational material such as brochures, videos and more with additional suggestions, ideas for games and advice at www.paprica.ch (website in German and French only).

ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Young children should get at least three hours of physical activity every day (playing outside, crawling, walking, etc.).

LESS SITTING
Try to minimise the amount of time your child spends sitting still. Young children do not belong in front of a screen (TV, computer, video games, etc.).

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

18 Months
- scribbles
- identifies body parts
- speaks in two-word sentences
- looks for hidden objects
- throws a ball
- jumps on the spot
- turns the pages of a book
- starts to get dressed independently
- kicks a ball
- climbs stairs
- builds towers with building blocks

2½ years
- builds towers with building blocks
- starts to get dressed independently
- kicks a ball
- turns the pages of a book
- looks for hidden objects
- throws a ball
- jumps on the spot
- climbs stairs
- builds towers with building blocks
- speaks in two-word sentences
- identifies body parts
- scribbles