PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIPS TO DO WITH YOUR CHILD

2 1/2 to 4 years

Département médico-chirurgical de pédiatrie - DMCP
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 my personality
- improve my mobility and channel my energy
- become more familiar with my body and more adept with my hands
- meet other children
- learn and understand my environment

My parents can help me by:

- encouraging me to express my ideas and my imagination
- ensuring that I interact with children my age
- helping me follow instructions and rules
- giving me the opportunity to learn how to do things on my own
- going outside to play with me in any kind of weather
CRUNCH FOR TIME?

Helping mummy and daddy
Encourage your child to help you put away the groceries. They can put items of various sizes and weights where they belong.

variation
Let them help with housework.

Let’s dance!
Play some music you enjoy listening to, and dance with your child.

variation
Choose different rhythms and musical styles.

Jumping and diving
Your child can dive into a pile of pillows or roll around on the carpet.

variation
Hold your child’s hands and let them jump around on the bed.
QUIET ACTIVITIES

**Playing dress-up**

Fill a bag or box with items of clothing that are too large for your child (e.g. hats, scarves or your own clothes and shoes).

*variation*

Let your child dress up their stuffed animals or dolls.

**Beware of crocodiles**

Mark a path on the ground (with adhesive tape, string, branches, etc.). Anyone who steps off the path falls into the water.

*variation*

Walk in single file. The person at the head of the line demonstrates movements which the others in the line will copy.

**Playing silent hide-and-seek**

Play hide-and-seek with your child in the house.

*variation*

Play hide-and-seek with several children outside.
Too tired for physical activity?

**Build a cave or a shack**
Hang a blanket over a table or chairs to build a cave. Your child can hide in the cave and make up a story to go with it.

**Variation**
Go outside and mark the boundaries of a shack using stones or branches.

**The world of things**
Give your child things to play with (laundry basket, cardboard boxes, newspapers, etc.).

**Variation**
Newspaper can be crumpled up into balls that can be aimed at the wastepaper bin as a target. It can also be used to make swords.

**Painting and drawing**
Draw with your child.

**Variation**
Draw an animal. Let your child pretend to be that animal.
WEARING THEM OUT

Playing horse
Place obstacles on the ground that your child can jump over like a horse.

variation
Outside, your child can climb onto low walls, steps or benches and jump off.

Collecting
Go for a walk and collect what nature has to offer: stones, leaves, chestnuts, etc.

variation
Knock chestnuts together to make sounds or collect them in a container.

Playing football
Play football with your child.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Children between the ages of two and four should get at least three hours of physical activity every day (playing outside, running, jumping, etc.).

**LESS SITTING**

Try to minimise the amount of time your child spends sitting still. Children under the age of three do not belong in front of a screen (TV, computer, video games, etc.). From the age of three, children should not spend more than one hour a day in front of a screen.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

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

**BASIC PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES**

- climbing, pulling up, standing tall, scaling something
- maintaining balance
- throwing and catching
- jumping (up and down)
- sliding (playground), moving on wheels
- swinging, moving forwards and backwards rhythmically
- rolling over and spinning around
- using their strength
- floating in the water, stopping a fall, tolerating the feeling of a free fall
- seeking out and mastering dangerous situations
- running and testing their limits (to the point of healthy exhaustion)
- practising and demonstrating routines

**IMPRINT**

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