



Support Your Child's Physical Changes

Your child goes through amazing physical changes in the first few years. At birth he is totally dependent on you, but by one year he may be walking and talking!

Your child is growing in 3 big ways: Think about your child's physical growth and development in three ways: gross (large) motor development, fine (small) motor development, and self-help skills. Every day is full of chances for your child to develop these skills:

YOUR INFANT:

- Pick up and hug and hold your baby often. Snuggle while talking and singing to baby.
- Give your baby toys that he can interact with: soft hanging mobiles, squeeze toys, rattles.
- Put your baby in different positions during the day: sitting, in a swing, lying down for tummy time. But never put a baby to sleep on her stomach – always on her back.
- Play with him and support him as he learns to roll over, sit up, crawl and pull himself to stand. Roll a ball back and forth with him.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Give your toddler toys that encourage use of his hands: cars and trucks, building blocks, dolls, puppets. Get down on your knees and help your child to play "build a house" or "puppet show."
- Let your child draw and write as much as she can. Provide big non-toxic washable crayons and markers, with sturdy paper to draw on. Use blank paper often (instead of only coloring books) so your child can truly use his imagination. It's okay to scribble!
- Let your toddler dress herself. You can turn this into a game about matching outfits and colors. Or ask her, "How fast can you...?"
- Run! Jump! Toss a ball! Let your child release his energy in an open space while your supervise.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Run, jump and climb. Play catch or tag. At least a few times a week let your child run and play in a safe place outdoors: a yard, a playground, or a park.
- Have your own "dance show" with the radio on. Or put on a play with easy costumes you've made from paper or old clothes.
- Take the stairs together whenever you can in stores and parking garages. While you're waiting for a bus, walk over to read a sign or to look in a store window. Your child needs to move!
- Play games with a jump rope. Lay it out straight on the ground and have your child pretend to "walk the tightrope" in the circus. Once he can do this, have him hop along the rope. Then put the rope in a circle and have him hop into and out of it, first with both feet and then on one foot. The two of you can keep making up new tricks.

ParentTips is a monthly resource for parents with young children.
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