



Building the Large Muscles

Young children need many opportunities to develop and build their large muscles. This is known as **gross motor development**. Large muscles are found in the arms, legs, stomach, back, and feet. You can help your child develop her large muscles through active play and movement. Try these easy and fun activities with your child:

YOUR INFANT (birth to 2 years old):

- Give your child toys that he can interact with: soft hanging mobiles, squeeze toys, rattles.
- Help your infant practice rolling, pivoting, supported sitting, crawling and pulling to stand. Before you know it, he will be doing these things on his own!
- Let your child tear paper. Provide her with an old magazine or other scrap paper. Show her how to tear the pages. Tearing allows babies to work on their gross motor skills while exploring cause and effect.

YOUR TODDLER (2-3 year olds):

- Have your child catch, throw, and kick a beach ball or balloon.
- Encourage your child to tumble and roll on a soft rug or play mat.
- Go to the local playground. Urge your child to explore the playground equipment: climb a ladder, use the slide, jump off low objects, swing, etc. Always supervise your child while he is playing on the equipment.
- Play *Follow the Leader*: Have your child copy your big muscle movements or actions, such as running, hopping, jumping, galloping, etc.
- Sing songs that encourage movement. Try: *Ring-Around-A-Rosie*, *Hokey Pokey*, *Happy & You Know It*, or *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*.
- Play running and chasing games, such as Tag, Blob Tag (join hands with chaser when tagged), Freeze Tag (stop when tagged), or Hide-n-Seek.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER (4 year olds):

- Have a *Potato Sack Race*! Help your child get into an old pillowcase. (Her feet should be inside the pillowcase and her hands should hold the sides of the pillowcase up around her waist.) Then, ask your child to jump or bounce to a 'finish line' set up a short distance away. Once your child has practiced the movement, try having her race against her friends, siblings, or you!
- Try *Dodge Ball*: Ask your child to run from a chosen 'point A' to a 'point B'. Using a soft ball, roll the ball and attempt to touch him with the ball below the knees. When the ball makes contact with him (below the knee), switch roles, allowing your child to roll the ball to get you.
- Jump! Place a long strip of masking tape on the floor and have your child stand on one end and jump forward. Measure how far your child jumps, marking it on the masking tape.

Book Suggestion

Scout by Cathryn Falwell