



## Building Endurance & Strength

Physical **strength** is having a strong body and using the muscles. This means, for example, that your child can lift and carry objects without help, or push and pull objects. **Endurance** is the ability to be active for long periods of time. To build your child's strength and endurance:

### YOUR INFANT (birth to 2 years old):

- Develop your baby's arm strength<sup>1</sup> by providing lots of supervised tummy time – time when your baby is on her stomach in a safe place on the floor. As your baby learns to grab, push up from the tummy position, roll over, and pull to standing, she is developing arm strength. Encourage movement by getting down on the floor and urging her to come towards you; place an object near her to promote reaching and grabbing. Don't frustrate your baby: make sure she can actually get to you or the toy.
- Encourage your walking infant to run! Pretend to safely "chase" him around the house.
- Practice safely going up and down stairs (first crawling then walking) with your child. Watch your child closely and keep a hand within easy reach to catch a fall. As your child gets older, take the stairs at every opportunity, rather than using the elevator or escalator.

### YOUR TODDLER (2-3 year olds):

- Take family walks, increasing the distance slightly each time you walk.
- Play games, such as Leap Frog, Hop Scotch, or the Limbo, with your child. These activities improve his lower body strength.
- Encourage your child to climb on playground equipment – up ladders and rock walls. Help her do the Monkey Bars; keep practicing until she is able to do it independently!
- Run! Play tag, have a race, run with the family dog, or simply run for the fun of it.

### YOUR PRESCHOOLER (4 year olds):

- Rake leaves, dig in the garden, or make a snow fort with your child. These are all moderate endurance activities.
- Do sit-ups or pull-ups with your child. See how many she can do, and encourage her to complete one more sit-up and pull-up every time you do them.
- Get wet! Teach your child how to swim. Walking, running, or simply playing in the water all build endurance. Remember that children should never swim alone – even skilled swimmers need supervision.
- Try a *Paper Plate Run*. Tell your child to hold a paper plate to his stomach with one hand, run for about 10 steps, let go of the paper plate, and keep running until the paper plate falls to the ground. Mark the spot where the plate landed. Do it again. See if your child can keep the plate attached to his tummy for a longer distance. NOTE: The faster your child runs, the longer the paper plate will stay on his tummy!

## Book Suggestions

*The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper and Loren Long

*Winners Never Quit* by Mia Hamm and Carol Thompson

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<sup>1</sup> "Baby Arm Strength Development" by Chloe Zimmerman. <[http://www.ehow.com/facts\\_7244327\\_baby-arm-strength-development.html#ixzz1xK7MVAaw](http://www.ehow.com/facts_7244327_baby-arm-strength-development.html#ixzz1xK7MVAaw)>