

# Early Head Start Home Connection

## Physical Development

### Birth-12 Months:



#### **What is this activity?**

**Drop the Ball-** This activity is designed to take place outside, but you could do this inside as well. Start by giving your baby an object like a ball, a balled-up piece of paper, or a toy of their choice, and wait for them to drop it. When they do, add some dialog such as “Down it falls, up it comes!” and hand the object back to them. If your baby engages in the activity, try giving them a different object to continue their interest.

#### **Why is it important?**

This is a good activity for infants to practice starting around 4 or 5 months, when the gross motor in the arms, wrists, and hands become voluntary and coordinated. Even if they are older they will continue to benefit from practicing using their arms and hands! You can even do it with younger babies, by assisting them in holding and letting go of the object, to strengthen their muscles and to help develop their understanding of cause and effect.

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### 12 Months - 24 Months:



#### **What is this activity?**

**Fast-Slow Race!** Is an activity you can do with your toddler as they begin walking. Set out a starting line and count out loud with your child “One, two, three!”, and begin running to the finish line. During your race, call out “Slow!” and see if your child can adjust their speed, and make sure to model yourself. Then give them an opportunity to call out “Fast” or “Slow.” To continue the activity further, you can ask “How slow can you go?” or “How fast can you run?” to show the different levels of each.

#### **Why is it important?**

This activity helps your child physically with their gross motor, but also cognitively, teaching them to follow direction and connect what they hear to what they are doing. Motor skills emerge from complex interactions among neurological development, physical growth, learning, and motivation, so not only does this activity help strengthen their leg muscles and balance skills, it also helps with many other areas of development!

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### 24 Months- 36 Months:



#### **What is this activity?**

**Clothes Call-** Provide a variety of clothes for your child. Invite them to put the clothes of their choosing on. You can offer your child encouragement and suggestions for putting on their clothes, “try putting your head in the big hole and then your arms in the small hole of your shirt!” Give your child time to practice their skills getting dressed. If they are struggling you can demonstrate for them and then give them more time to practice! Over time they will get it.

#### **Why is it important?**

Getting dressed can be a challenging task for a child. Allowing them the opportunity to practice will help them build their skills and their confidence. Getting dressed can help build up the muscles and coordination in your child's fingers and hands. This is important for getting dressed but also for skills like learning to write later on.

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## Read Your Child's Signals

**Babies and young children know when they are hungry or full.** They have many signals for letting us know what their bodies need by using their voices, faces, and actions. Reading your child's signals means watching and listening to them and trying to understand what their behavior means.

Responding to your child's signals lets them know that:

- they can trust themselves to know when they are hungry and full.
- they are a good communicator and that their needs will be met.

Babies have their own cues for hungry or full:

**Hungry-** opening their mouth, opening their hands, pointing to food, acting excited when they see food

**Full-** closing their mouth and refusing to open it, turning their head away, pushing the food away

## Building Skills Through Routines



Infants and toddlers learn and grow through nurturing and trusting relationships. They learn how to form relationships, communicate, respond to challenges, and begin to experience, recognize and regulate their emotions. When infants and toddlers are feeling safe and alert, they are more likely to observe, explore, play, interact, and experiment with the people and world around them. Through new and repeated experiences, infants and toddlers begin to develop physically by enhancing their gross and fine motor skills. Gross motor development involves the larger, stronger muscle groups of the body. Fine motor development refers to the movements made with the small muscles in our body like our hands.

**Try This:** Build some gross motor activities into your routines, practice crawling/ walking, jumping, or create an obstacle course for your child based on their skill level. Some fine motor activities to build into your routines are passing your child objects, holding a fork or spoon while eating or encouraging your child to draw or color.



## BENEFITS OF EXERCISE WHILE PREGNANT

During pregnancy, exercise can:

- Reduce backaches, constipation, bloating and swelling
- Boost your mood and energy levels
- Help you sleep better
- Prevent excess weight gain
- Promote muscle tone, strength and endurance

Other possible benefits of following a regular exercise program during pregnancy may include:

- A lower risk of gestational diabetes
- Shortened labor
- A reduced risk of having a C-section

For most pregnant women, 30 minutes of daily exercise is recommended. Remember to warm up, stretch and cool down. Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated and be careful to avoid overheating.

*\*Please be sure to consult your health care provider before starting an exercise routine.*

**Look here for some ideas to stay active with your toddler:**

<https://activeforlife.com/49-fun-physical-activities-to-do-with-kids-aged-2-to-4/>

**Check out our Community Action YouTube channel!**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvY3MtbztRFH791lc5Zt-SA>