

Active Play Every Day



0-3
YEARS



An introduction
to Active Play
Guidelines
for **0-3 year**
old children

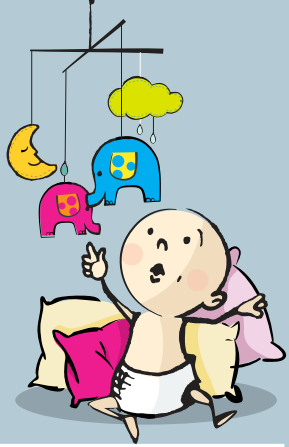


This leaflet has been developed to help parents and carers support the healthy development of their child through active play.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Active Play Every Day



Introduction

All forms of play are really important for young children, however active play is the most appropriate form of physical activity.

Being physically active early lays the foundation for good health, learning, communication and confidence as children grow.

As your child grows opportunities to be active through play, both with you and independently (on their own or with other children), helps with their physical development and encourages their learning abilities.



TIP

Make time to play with your baby everyday

Active Play for young children

Active play describes most forms of physical activity that young children can do including:

- **Everyday tasks:** climbing steps, helping tidy up, gardening or unpacking the shopping.
- **Unstructured activity:** lying and rolling on the floor, dancing to music, chasing or climbing.
- **Structured activity:** specific games such as Incy Wincy Spider, kicking a ball, hide and seek or games played in pre-school.
- **Active travel:** walking, pedalling or using a scooter to get from place to place.

Daily unrestricted active play is important to help young children:

- Develop their senses.
- Develop good strength, balance and posture.
- Learn about how their bodies work.
- Build social and emotional bonds.

Physically active play also helps them:

- Develop essential movement skills.
- Develop strong bones.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.



Tips for safe Active Play

Physically active children should be in a safe environment and supervised at all times:

- Check that equipment is suitable (not too big, small, heavy or high) for your child's age and ability.
- Teach your child how to climb up and down before you let them climb independently.
- Encourage new activities and allow your child to adapt activities to suit their own play - let them discover their own limitations.
- Ensure they take drinks regularly when playing, particularly when it is hot.
- Keep active play free from stress - having fun is important for both of you.
- Encourage and praise them for all their efforts.



Children's attention spans differ and they may get tired of an activity or game quite quickly.

Don't extend any activity to the stage where one or both of you stop enjoying it.

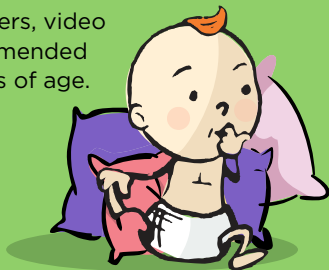
TIP
Always stop
if they ask

How much?



During the first months your babies main activities will be sleeping and feeding. The amount of awake time gradually increases and, when your baby is not feeding, this time should be used to encourage movement and active play.

- Babies need to be active several times a day especially through floor based play with you.
- It is also important that the amount of time your baby is not active is limited to no more than an hour at a time except when they are sleeping. This includes time spent awake in car seats, bouncers, walkers and buggies.
- Screen time (TV, computers, video and others) is not recommended for children under 2 years of age.



Active Play ideas for all

There are many ways to help your child develop though active play.

For more active play ideas you can download activity sheets from www.getirelandactive.ie.

Active Play tips and ideas

- Introduce a little 'tummy time' everyday
- Give time for leg kicking without a nappy on
- Hang a mobile to encourage reaching and grasping
- Give them a rattle to hold and swipe at toys placed within reach



0-3
MONTHS

- Guide hands and play 'head, shoulder, knees and toes'
- Continue 'tummy time' everyday for a little longer at a time
- Place toys just out of reach to encourage reaching and moving
- Lay on back and gently encourage rolling to each side
- Encourage letting go of toys in one hand and passing to the other

3-6
MONTHS

- Encourage sitting up from lying down
- Give gentle knee rides
- Play peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake to encourage movement
- Play music and hold, rock or dance with them in your arms
- Encourage crawling or shuffling as much as possible
- Go swimming

6-9
MONTHS

- Sit on floor and roll a soft ball to them
- Play games that involve picking up, pouring, giving and taking
- Encourage standing and walking holding on to low sturdy furniture
- Stand behind and hold two hands out in front to practice walking
- Teach climbing up and down on the sofa and stairs
- Continue action games of swinging, bouncing, knee and ankle rides

9-12
MONTHS

How much?

1-3
YEARS

How much physical activity does your child need?

Children under 6 years of age that are walking need to be active for at least three hours everyday.

This includes light activities such as building blocks or playing on the floor and more vigorous activities such as running and jumping. Three hours might seem like a lot but young children are naturally active and are always 'on the go'.

It is also important that the amount of time your child is not active is limited to no more than an hour at a time except when they are sleeping.

Screen time (TV, computers, video and others) or other screen related activities should be limited to a maximum of 1 hour per day for children over 2 years of age.

Rest in between active play is important too, napping and activities such as drawing, listening to stories and making puzzles all contribute to your child's overall health and development.

TIP
Make sure your
child gets about
12 hours sleep in
every 24 hours.



Active Play tips and ideas

12-18
MONTHS

- Encourage first steps by kneeling in front with your arms open wide
- Teach them to walk sideways and backwards while holding hands
- Give them a large wheeled toy to push and pull around
- Encourage them to squat down to pick up a toy
- Continue to play ball and encourage climbing
- Let them fill and empty toys from a box or basket

18-24
MONTHS

- Encourage walking in different directions and on different surfaces
- Support them to start walking up steps or stairs
- Let them imitate your actions - play follow the leader
- Play peek-a-boo around the house or garden
- Introduce kicking a ball between you or off a wall
- Play simple chase or blow bubbles for them to catch

2-3
YEARS

- Encourage more ball activities kicking, catching and throwing
- Use music and action songs such as ring-a-ring a rosie
- Let them help with little jobs around the house
- Encourage them to push along on or pedal a a tricycle
- Continue chasing games and hide-and-seek
- Copycat activities - tip toes, skip, jump, hop



Basic Movement Skills

Children learn more physical skills in their first six years than at any other point in their lives.

These are called the basic or fundamental movement skills and are the building blocks for lifelong activity.

MOVEMENT SKILLS

Crawling
Walking
Running
Jumping
(for distance, for height, one leg to another)
Hopping
Skipping
Swinging
Side stepping
Dodging
Galloping
Leaping
Climbing

BODY CONTROL SKILLS

Balancing
on one foot
Walking on a
line or beam
Climbing
Rolling
(forward roll, log roll)

MOVEMENT SKILLS

Catching
Overhand
throw
Underhand
throw
Punt kicking
(kicking ball from hands)
Striking with
an implement
Two handed
striking
Hand dribbling
(repeatedly bouncing a ball with one hand)
Foot dribbling
Kicking
Chest passing



Child development

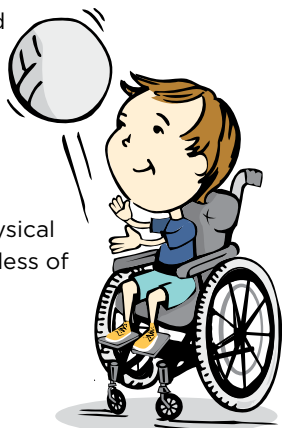
For information about your child's development visit www.hse.ie/caringforyourbaby.

Your Public Health Nurse may also give you copies of the booklets ***Caring for Your Baby 0-6 months or Caring for Your Child 6 months-2 years.***

If you are concerned about your child's development speak with your GP or Public Health nurse.

If your child has been diagnosed with a disability, speak with their healthcare team about specific equipment and activities needed to help them keep active.

All children will benefit from physical activity and active play - regardless of their level of ability.



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For more active play ideas for all ages visit www.getirelandactive.ie