

Physical development: What to expect Early Years



Being physically active every day is important for the healthy growth and development of your baby.

Physical exercise for babies

- Lay your baby on their back so that they can kick their legs and move their bodies.
- Tummy time helps strengthen the back, neck and shoulders, and should be encouraged every day.
- Once your baby is crawling, let them crawl around the floor, making sure it's a safe area to explore.





- Playing with toys encourages your baby to reach for, push and pull their toys.
- Clapping: Take turns clapping your hands and their hands together.
- Action nursery rhymes teaches your baby different movements with their bodies.
- Swimming: You don't have to wait until your baby is vaccinated to take them swimming.
- Once your child is crawling or walking, you can play chasing games.

Source attribution: NHS

Children that can walk on their own should be physically active each day for 180 minutes (3 hours). This should be spread out throughout the day.

Physical exercise for toddlers

- Let your toddler walk, rather than always using the buggy.
- Action nursery rhymes and dancing to music is a great way for children to move their bodies in different ways.
- Children under 5 shouldn't be inactive for long periods of time, except when they're asleep.





- Playing chasing games and having fun with bubbles are great ways to play and get exercise at the same time.
- Toys that you can pick up and move around will help to improve coordination and develop muscles in the arms and hands.
- Ball play will develop skills such as rolling, kicking, catching and throwing.
- Going swimming, water play or going to the beach are great activities that use space for walking, moving, running, hopping and jumping.
- Going to the park and using the slide, climbing frame and the space allows your toddler the freedom to run around and be active.

Source attribution: NHS

Pre-school children should be physically active each day for 180 minutes (3 hours). At least 60 minutes of this time should be of moderate-to-vigorous activity.

Physical exercise for 3-4-year-olds

Wake and shake activities are a great way to encourage your child to be active. You can find these on the NHS Healthier Families website (previously Change4Life).

Visit nhs.uk/healthier-families for great ideas.





Here are some other suggestions for active fun:

- 🕒 Riding a bike or scooter.
- 🕒 Skipping and hopping.
- 🕒 Active nursery rhymes and dancing.
- 🕒 Playground equipment and play parks.
- 🕒 Playing ball games.
- 🕒 Going for walks on the beach, in the park or in the woods.
- 🕒 Playing throwing and catching games.
- 🕒 Swimming.
- 🕒 Gymnastics.

Source attribution: NHS

Contact and social media

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