

ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC PHYSICAL THERAPY

FACT SHEET

Family Resources for *Fun with Physical Activity* and Young Children

What is *Fun with Physical Activity*?

Young children love to move and play, because it is fun! Your child's everyday life offers endless opportunities to promote his or her health, wellness, and fitness through a variety of physical activities. Moving fosters brain development and involves the interaction of strength, flexibility, coordination, balance, and endurance. Gross motor skills involving large muscles are used for rolling, crawling, walking, and running. Fine motor skills requiring dexterity and eye-hand coordination involve smaller muscles for activities such as eating, dressing, and writing. Physical activity consists of recreational activities such as swimming or playing T-ball or soccer. Unstructured activities may include riding tricycles or playing at the neighborhood park with other children. Physical activity can be encouraged during every day routines and playtimes.

What role does family have in *Fun with Physical Activity*?

Children benefit from loving relationships with family members and caregivers who are encouraging, responsive, and available to share in their learning experiences. You are your child's greatest teacher, because you understand your child the very best and can create opportunities for learning through play. Some of the best interactions occur during family activities such as doing laundry, walking the dog, preparing meals together, playing games, or creating art projects with siblings. Organized and spontaneous activities can provide fun for the entire family and may be shared with family and friends.

Where might I find ideas for *Fun with Physical Activity* with my child?

The following resources include a variety of fun ideas for physical activity for specific age groups, special occasions, play dates, or activities provided in the community:

- The ***APTA Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy Pinterest Page*** offers movement activities and ideas to promote health, development, and participation for infants and children. Available at <http://www.pinterest.com/aptasop/>.
- The ***Bright Futures Activity Book*** is available for sharing by Bright Futures at Georgetown University. This physical activity book, also available in Spanish, provides suggestions for movement activities with a focus on developing a foundation for healthy living habits. Available at <http://www.brightfutures.org/activity/index.htm>.
- ***The Tips and Tools on Play*** is a central resource guide developed by Zero to Three National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. These resources include podcasts, downloadable

booklets for families, theme activities associated with the time of year, tips for choosing toys, play activities organized according to age groups, and a slide show that would be useful for community talks about the importance of play. Available at <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/play/tips-and-tools-play.html>.

- **10 Ways to Play this Weekend** is from the Creative Family Fun website and provides suggestions for 10 fun activities for families to try with their children on the weekend, with up to 8 weekends of suggestions available, and tips to “get moving.” Available at <http://www.creativefamilyfun.net/search/label/ways%20to%20play>.
- **Teacher Toolbox** from the Society of Health and Physical Educators website provides monthly activity ideas, classroom resources, and physical activity calendars. Activities are available in English and Spanish for the preschool and school age child. Available at <http://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/teachertoolbox/>. Specific physical development and outdoor activities for children 5 years and younger are available at the Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play (HSBS) <http://www.playgroundprofessionals.com/encyclopedia/h/head-start-body-start>.
- **Family TLC** provides strategies to enhance playtime through family-centered activities involving age appropriate movements for developing your child’s motor skills. The emphasis on parent-child relationships is especially valuable. Available at <http://familytlc.net/index.html>.
- **Hands On: As We Grow** is a website providing numerous activity links categorized by age, objective, theme, and material. Some of the useful resources include “40 Gross Motor Activities to Get Your Kids Moving,” “30 Gross Motor Activities for Kids with Excess Energy,” “30 Kids Activities & Materials for Promoting Fine Motor Skills,” and “50 Toddler Activities.” Activities are available for children 0-3 years old and are broken up into 6 month time frames. Available at <http://handsonaswegrow.com/>.
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** distributes guidelines for physical activity and ideas for how to promote your child’s participation in activities. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adding-pa/activities-children.html>.
- **Healthychildren.org** is a website that gives recommendations on many topics including nutrition, fitness, developmental milestones, social situations, and more. Information is provided from prenatal to young adult. Available at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/Pages/Increasing-Physical-Activity-in-Preschool-Years.aspx>.

How might a pediatric physical therapist help choose physical activities for my child with a disability?

Pediatric physical therapists are licensed healthcare professionals with specialized education and experience to promote learning through movement in young children - especially children with or at risk for a developmental delay or disability. Pediatric physical therapists understand physical activity is important for optimal development and use play to meet child and family goals. A pediatric physical therapist is an excellent resource to help you choose or adapt activities to provide “just the right” challenge for your child’s learning and motor development at home or in the community. Pediatric

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physical therapists also work together within a team, including the family, to provide individualized evaluations, interventions, education and resources to enhance the overall health, wellness, fitness, and development of your child. Other team members might include the child's teacher, childcare provider, physician, occupational therapist, and speech-language pathologist.

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