



Physical Development and Wellness

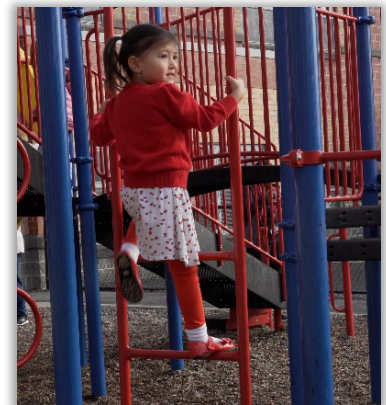
How Do Preschool Children Develop Healthy Habits and Use Their Bodies to Explore and Experience the World?

Preschool children use their bodies and all their senses to explore and experience the world. Active play is critical for the development of coordination, balance, gross-motor skills (like walking, running, and jumping) and fine motor skills (like grasping and maneuvering objects). Children begin to make important connections between developing safe and healthy habits and their growing bodies. Early care and education providers must provide daily opportunities for children to engage in sustained physical activity (outdoors and indoors), eat nutritious meals, develop healthy sleep and rest behaviors, and learn positive health and safety practices.

Physical Development and Wellness

Motor Development: locomotor and non-locomotor skills; fine motor skills; hand-eye coordination; explores senses; interacts with objects and people; and spatial awareness

Wellness: body growth and development; self-care practices; healthy eating habits; healthy sleep and rest behaviors; physical activity; and develop safety practices and behaviors



Books to Promote Healthy Habits

Motor Development

- A Squiggly Story* by Andrew Larson
- ABC Yoga* by Christine Engle
- Balancing Act* by Ellen Stoll Walsh
- Dino Basketball* by Lisa Wheeler
- Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon
- From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle
- Get Up and Go* by Nancy Carlson
- I Got the Rhythm* by Connie Schofield-Morrison
- Pete the Cat and the Itsy-Bitsy Spider* by James Dean
- Play this Book* by Jessica Young
- Shake the Tree* by Chiara Vignocchi
- Singing in the Rain* by Tim Hopgood
- A Squiggly Story* by Andrew Larson
- We All Play* by Julie Flett
- Wiggle* by Doreen Cronin

Wellness

- Eat More Colors* by Breon Williams
- Eating the Alphabet and Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert
- Even Superheroes Have to Sleep* by Sarah Crow
- I Am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness* by Susan Verde and Peter H. Reynolds
- Let's Go for a Walk* by Ranger Hamza
- Summer Supper* by Rubin Pfeffer
- My Magic Breath: Finding Calm Through Mindful Breathing* by Nick Ortner
- The Busy Body Book* by Lizzie Rockwell
- The Feel-Good Book* by Todd Parr
- The Creature of Habit* by Jennifer E. Smith
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle

Examples of Integrated Learning

How children may exhibit these skills	How early care and education providers can encourage these skills
<p>Create obstacle course on playground using toys, cones, foam blocks, etc. Run, crawl and slide using uncoordinated and coordinated movements to interact with and move around objects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide daily opportunities for children to engage in sustained physical activity both indoors and outdoors in all kinds of weather. ▪ Engage in a variety of movement activities with children (singing and dancing, yoga, games, etc.) ▪ Model bending, stretching, skipping, hopping on one foot, etc. ▪ Verbally acknowledge and celebrate when children are physically active. Joyfully participate in physical activities with them. <i>Example:</i> “I see Timothy maneuvering through an obstacle course! Let’s all try it together!” Describe motions during active participation.
<p>String a variety of different-sized beads to make a patterned necklace at the art area. Attempt to tie knots on the ends of the string so beads don’t fall off.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer a variety of interesting materials that promote the development of fine-motor skills and hand-eye coordination. For example, beads, buttons, string, pipe cleaners, scissors, clay, play dough, writing tools, etc. ▪ Invite children to try stringing beads, cutting paper, shaping clay, holding a pencil, and tracing shapes with you. Model actions and use language to describe how you are doing it. <i>Example:</i> “I need to hold the string in one hand like this and slowly guide the center of the bead onto the string and pull it all the way down to the end.” ▪ Encourage children to take risks and attempt new skills. <i>Example:</i> “Want to try the smaller scissors today, Jamar? I really think you can do it!”
<p>Prepare for mealtimes by cleaning-up toys, washing hands, setting table, and selecting and serving own food. Engage in conversation with adults and peers during meals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage children to practice self-care skills with increasing independence and offer modeling and support when needed. <i>Example:</i> “You did it! You put on your own coat today. I’m happy to help button or you can try it yourself first.” ▪ Use language to promote healthy eating and rest habits. <i>Example:</i> “Lucy is taking her water bottle over to her cot during rest time in case she gets thirsty. That’s a great idea.” ▪ Celebrate healthy minds and bodies by making explicit connections between growing bodies, physical development, and wellness. <i>Example:</i> “Whoa! You ran on the basketball court and pushed Noah on the swing today. Your heart and lungs are going to get so strong!”

Tools and Resources

[Harvard Health Blog: 6 Reasons Children Need to Play Outside](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics: Making Physical Activity a Way of Life](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Children](#)

[Help Me Grow: Motor Developmental Milestones](#)