



Exercise and Have Fun!

GAMES AND EXERCISES
FOR PARENTS
AND CHILDREN





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The art of being a physically active parent

As a new parent, finding time for regular physical activity can be a challenge. It is not always easy to balance family and professional responsibilities while taking time for YOURSELF. Too often, the easiest solution is to forget about your own needs. In this document, you will find examples of activities that are both useful and enjoyable, giving you the opportunity to keep moving while you play with your child. Playing with your child is essential to his or her full development.





TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

As you probably know, being physically active can protect you from health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, some forms of cancer and depression. In addition, regular physical activity improves the quality of your sleep, gives you energy and helps you manage your stress and anxiety. It can only help you be a better parent!

TIPS AND ADVICE

There are many benefits to adopting a physically active lifestyle, but you must keep at it. The following tips can help you and your family stay motivated.

- Replace certain sedentary activities connected with sitting in front of a screen with short daily sessions of games and exercises adapted to your child's abilities. Five, 10 or 15 minutes a day are enough to reap the benefits of physical activity.
- Take advantage of daily tasks to keep the whole family active: Do your errands on foot or by bicycle; let your child help you garden, rake the yard or shovel snow, providing appropriate tools, etc. Take every opportunity to get moving.
- Play outside: Go for a walk with the stroller or a sled, follow an obstacle course at a local park, go for a swim, go sliding, etc. A word of advice: choose a pleasant, stimulating setting you would like to visit again.
- Choose a variety of enjoyable seasonal activities.
- Involve your child in the choice of family activities by asking his/her preference: a game of hockey, a hike through the woods, etc.
- Invite friends or neighbours to participate in your activities.
- **Find information about:**
 - programs and services available in your municipality, in community centres or physical fitness centres: cardio-stroller, water fitness, drop-in daycare etc.
 - places where you can rent the equipment required to practise physical activities with a child: baby carriers for hiking, bike trailers for small children, baby sleds, a harness for cross-country skiing, etc.

SET AN EXAMPLE FOR YOUR CHILD

Because children learn through imitation, they copy your behaviour and that of others around them. In order to help your child develop a culture of physical activity early on, provide an environment that will give him/her a taste for a physically active lifestyle.

Here's how:

- by being physically active yourself
- by giving your child as many opportunities as possible to play and move vigorously to burn off excess energy
- by making time, in daily life, for spontaneity and new discoveries in order to appreciate how much fun it is to be active



Excellent investments to keep the family moving!

- Baby carrier for walking, hiking or snowshoeing (front or back baby carrier, sling, etc.)
- Bike trailer
- Stroller with brakes for jogging or in-line skating
- Child's sled
- Harness for cross-country skiing

This way you won't have to hire a babysitter in order to practise certain physical activities.



EXERCISE WHILE HAVING FUN!

The games and exercises described in this brochure will help you exercise with your family every day. This is a special time together; by “playing exercise” with your child you are discovering different aspects of his/her personality and getting to know him/her better. Besides, playing together provides the opportunity to laugh together and create happy family memories.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE PLAY IN A CHILD'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT

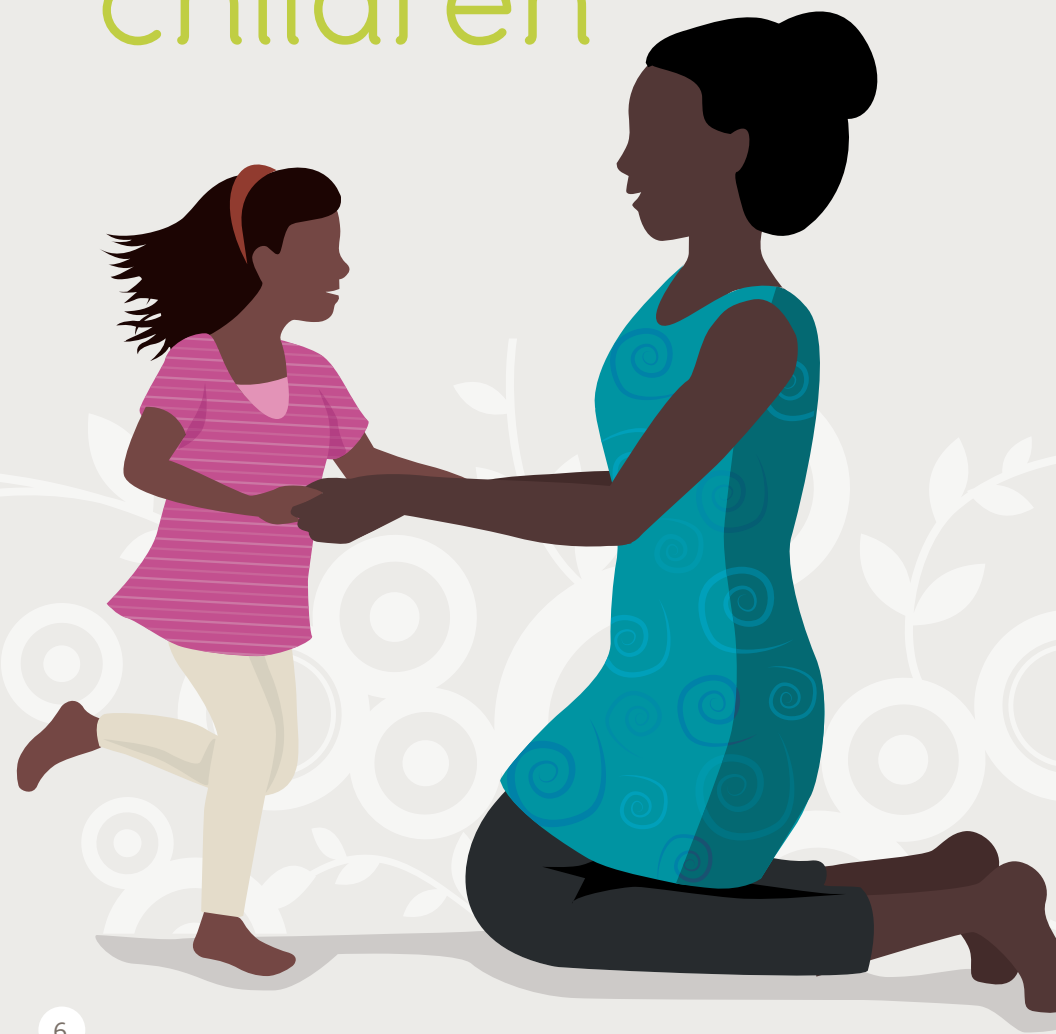
Child development specialists, education specialists and pediatricians agree that active play:

- gives children experiences of creativity and friendship in a context of fun
- affects physical, emotional, social and cognitive well-being
- fosters the development of motor skills¹
- can help children adapt and maintain a physically active lifestyle throughout adolescence and adulthood

1. The development of motor skills is a process of progressive change that begins before birth and continues for many years. This process involves permanent interaction between the child's nervous system and stimulation provided by the surrounding world. This interaction enables the brain's nerve systems, present at birth, to become functional and start networking. In short, the more a child is stimulated by his/her environment, the greater the number of neural connections that will be established, thus encouraging the development of cognitive, communication and social interaction abilities.

Motor development is associated, among others, with the acquisition of fundamental motor patterns that will grow and develop: these are the motor skills.

Games and exercises for parents and children



1 Warm up first!

To avoid injury, it is important to increase your body temperature for five to ten minutes before working your muscles. Waltz to music, stand on tiptoe, stretch your arms over your head, make broad gestures, bend over... Your child will enjoy this!

Next, dance energetically, moving all the parts of your body one after another. Spin, jump, clap to the rhythm. A young child will laugh in your arms; an older child will imitate you and make up his/her own dances.

HOLD YOUR CHILD SECURELY DURING THE WARM-UP

Hold a baby of 0 to 6 months close to your body, either in a front baby carrier or in a sling. Support the baby's head and neck with one hand and place the other hand under baby's bottom.

Hold a baby of 6 months to walking age on your hip with one arm or put the baby in front of you with his/her legs around your waist. You may use a sling or a back baby carrier, whichever you and your child prefer. If your child becomes too heavy, sit him/her in a baby seat facing you.

As soon as your child can walk, encourage him/her to warm up with you. Dance together; kneel down and hold the baby's hands to show him/her how to clap to the music.



2 Now, let's play!

Here are some 30 games and exercises you can try with your child from birth to age 5. Some will be more effective for you (your child provides resistance), while others will be effective for both of you.

The suggested games and exercises are divided according to the minimum age the child must be in order to participate. Each exercise is marked with a circle or a triangle:



This exercise is quite simple; there are few risks involved. You shouldn't have any problems.



This exercise, or part of it, might present a risk of injury if it is not done correctly. Read the description carefully and pay particular attention to the elements in boldface type.

Vary the exercises from one session to the next. Do them as often as possible during the week, according to your child's interest and your abilities.

To begin, during each session and for most of the exercises, do 10 to 15 repetitions at least twice (2 or more series). If you have difficulty doing 10 repetitions, do as many as you can. The number of repetitions you can do will probably increase from session to session. **Depending on the exercise, alternate sides after each set.**

A good way to make progress is to start by increasing the number of repetitions per series; for example, do 2 series of 12 repetitions instead of 2 series of 10 repetitions. Later, add another series while slightly reducing the number of repetitions; for example, do 3 series of 8 repetitions instead of 2 series of 12 repetitions. Later still, increase the number of repetitions in each series. As your child is gaining weight every day, you don't have to worry about increasing the weight load. Your child is doing it for you!



Be careful not to hold your breath

You have probably noticed that you tend to hold your breath when you pick up a heavy load. This causes an undesirable increase in blood pressure and should be avoided. Breathe normally when you “play exercise” with your child!



➔ From birth

WASHING WINDOWS ●

Parent's position: Sitting cross-legged, back straight, arms stretched forward at shoulder height, hands open, wrists bent.

Child's position: Lying on your thighs or, when he/she is able to sit up with help, seated on your thighs with his/her back to you.

Movement

1. Begin by making small circles with your hands in front of you and to the sides of your body. Gradually increase the size of the circles.
2. Move your arms behind you.
3. Let your buttocks and your body move a little as you make the circles, gently rocking the child.

FUN TIP

Encourage older children to help you "wash the windows."



PUSH AND PULL ●

Parent's position: Sitting cross-legged.

Child's position: Lying on your thighs or, when he/she is able to sit up with a support, seated on your thighs with his/her back to you.



Movement

1. Press your palms together as hard as possible while exhaling slowly.
2. Keeping your hands firmly in position, pretend to pull them apart.
3. Hold each contraction 10 to 15 seconds and repeat the exercise 10 times.

FUN TIP

Little babies will enjoy watching your movements, especially if you are singing at the same time. An older child might try to unstick your hands, which you hold together.

PEEK-A-BOO PUSH-UPS ▲

Parent's position: On all fours, knees below hips, back straight, head above your child's.

Child's position: Lying on his/her back or tummy, head directly below yours.

Movement

1. Bend and straighten your arms **while engaging your abs and glutes**, so that your body stays straight. **Keep your head in line with your upper body.**
2. Come down to a few inches above the floor and say, "peek-a-boo!" Ideally, you should do as many push-ups as you can, but stop before you feel pain.

NOTE

Once you have mastered these push-ups, you can progressively move your knees back.

FUN TIP

A game of PEEK-A-BOO makes regular push-ups more fun. You can kiss your child's forehead, nose or cheek when you come down. Ask your child's big brother or sister to play too.



CUCKOO CLOCK ▲

Parent's position: Standing, back straight, feet slightly apart and knees slightly bent.

Child's position: Hold your child close to you. **Support the baby's head and neck with one hand and place the other hand under baby's bottom.** An older child could wrap his/her legs around your waist.

Movement

1. Bend to the right. Keep your shoulders and head in line with your hips. Do not lean forward.
2. Bend to the left.
3. Come back to the starting position.
4. Bend your knees and lean forward, as though to sit on a chair.
5. Come back to the starting position.

FUN TIP

Imitate the tick-tock of a clock as you move from side to side. Each time you bend forward, say: one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock, etc.

VARIATION

You can hold your child with his/her back to you. This will show the baby a different view.



VERRRRRRY TALL ▲

Parent's position: Standing, back straight, feet slightly apart and knees slightly bent.

Child's position: Hold your child close to you. **Support the baby's head and neck with one hand and place the other hand under baby's bottom.** An older child could wrap his/her legs around your waist.

Movement

1. Stand on tiptoe and count to five.
2. Slowly return to the starting position.

FUN TIP

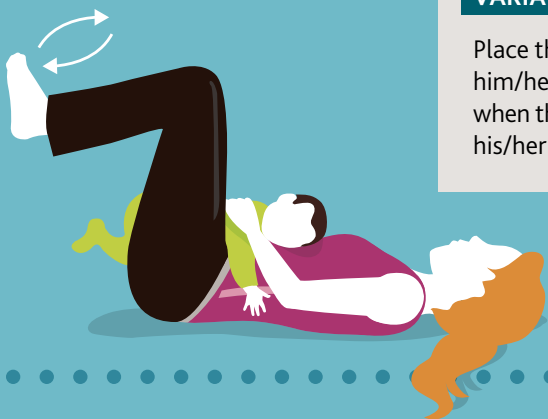
Ask the tallest child, "Is Daddy (or Mummy) tall?" Answer, "Verrrrry tall!" or use the child's name instead of yours.



SWING ●

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent, feet slightly apart.

Child's position: Lying on your stomach, facing you, legs dangling between yours. Use your hands to hold the child in place.



Movement

1. Lift both feet off the floor. Keep feet up and knees bent. Contract your glutes.
2. Make small, rapid kicks (at least 25) before returning to the starting position.

VARIATION

Place the child on your legs and have him/her "gallop" (4 months and up: when the child can hold up his/her head and neck).



ROLL ▲

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent, feet slightly apart.

Child's position: Lying on his/her tummy, on your chest.

Movement

1. Lift your head and shoulders **while pushing your lower back firmly into the floor and tightening your abs and glutes.**
2. Return **slowly** to the floor.

3. Hold your child tenderly. Let your tummy muscles do the work. **Do not pull yourself up using your arms or by pulling your child's arms.** It is neither necessary nor recommended to sit all the way up.

VARIATION

When your child is a little older, you can sit him/her facing you on your tummy and hold his/her hands (4 months and up: when the child can hold up his/her head and neck).



LITTLE DOG ●

Parent's position: On all fours.

Child's position:

- a. **Birth to 9 months:** lying on the floor in front of you, face up.
- b. **9 months and up:** crawling under and around your bridge.

Movement

1. Lift one leg to the side, knee bent (dog by a fire hydrant!) Repeat 15 times.
2. Lower your leg. Repeat with other leg.



VARIATIONS

A. Lift one leg straight out to the side, pointing your toes. Swing your leg forward and back 15 times. Lower your leg. Repeat with the other leg.

B. Lift one leg behind you, in line with your back, keeping your toes pointing down. Swing your leg up and down 15 times, making tiny movements. Lower your leg. Repeat with the other leg.



➔ As of 4 months or when your child can hold up his/her head and neck well

SKI LIFT ▲

Parent's position: Standing, back to the wall, feet slightly apart and away from the wall so that your heels are below your knees.

Child's position: Sitting with his/her back to you and held under the arms, leaning against you.

Movement

1. Slowly bend your knees until they form a 90° angle with the wall, or until you reach a sitting position. **Your knees should never be higher than your toes.**
2. Hold the position as long as you can and, when you feel you have had enough, let yourself slide gently to the floor.

NOTE

Wear non-slip shoes.



AROUND THE WORLD ▲

Parent's position and partner's position:

Standing back to back.

Child's position: Hold the child in your arms, between his/her waist and shoulders, back to you, close to your body.

Movement

1. You and your partner turn to the same side.
2. Pass the child to your partner.
3. You and your partner turn the other way.
4. Your partner passes the child back to you.
5. Change directions from one series to the next.

NOTE

Make sure that your partner is holding the child properly before you let go of the child. **Do not bend forward, and work your abs throughout the exercise. Keep the child close to your body.**



BABY ELEVATOR ●

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent, hands on the child's torso.

Child's position: Keep the child in a horizontal position.

Movement

1. Lift the child over your head, facing you.
2. Lower your child until your noses touch. Do not rest your child on your tummy between repetitions.



ROBOT ARMS ▲

Parent's position: Standing, back straight (you may lean against a wall), elbows close to your body, forearms bent 90° in front of you, palms up.

Child's position: Lying on his/her back on your forearms. **Support the child's head and neck with one hand and his/her bottom with the other hand.**

Movement

1. Raise your forearms slowly until your child is close to your body.
2. Slowly return to the starting position.



TRACTOR RIDE ▲

Parent's position: Sitting, legs straight, back straight.

Child's position: Sitting on your thighs, facing you. With your forearms, hold the child under the arms **while supporting his/her head with your hands.**

Movement

Level A

1. Move one hip forward and then the other, turning at the waist.
2. Make the same movement backwards.

Level B

1. Move both hips forward by digging your heels into the floor (the surface must be smooth).



FUN TIP

This makes for a bumpy ride, but your child will love it!

CRADLE ▲

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees slightly bent.

Child's position: Sitting on your lower abdomen, facing you. Hold your child under the arms.

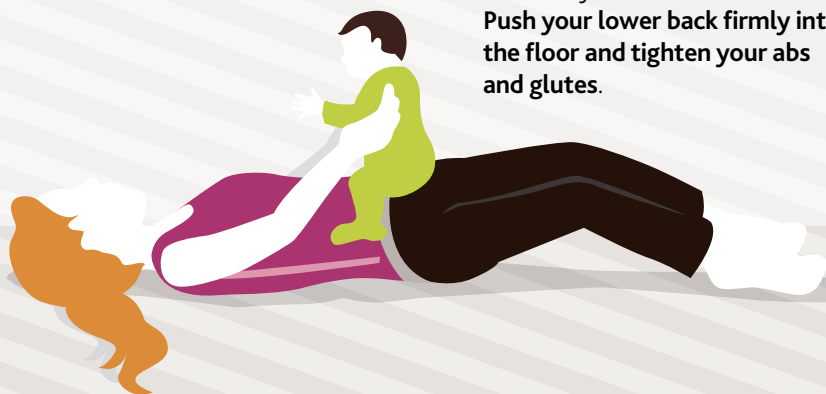
Movement

Level A

1. Keeping your shoulders and feet on the floor, roll your hips and try to touch your knees to the floor on the left, then on the right.

Level B

1. Same movement as for level A, but raise your feet off the floor. **Push your lower back firmly into the floor and tighten your abs and glutes.**





As of 6 months or when your child can sit up with help

PROMENADE-SAFARI ●

Parent's position: Lying on your side, ideally with your back to the wall.

Child's position: For the exercise with your right leg, seat your child facing you, over your right thigh. Hold his/her left hand with your right hand and his/her right thigh with your left hand (and vice versa for your left leg).

Movement

Level A

1. Raise your leg 60 cm (24 inches) from the floor.
2. Lower your leg slowly to 5 cm above the other leg.
3. Vary the length of time according to the animal your child is riding.
4. Change sides and repeat with the other leg.

Level B

1. Repeat steps 1 to 4 of level A, placing your child further down your leg, but not past your knee. Hold your child securely.



FUN TIP

Tell your child he/she is riding different kinds of wild animals. Describe the animals and the kind of ride your child is having with each.

GOING TO THE MOON ●

Parent's position: Lying on your back, legs up, the soles of your feet toward the ceiling. You may place a rolled towel beneath your hips.

Partner's position: Standing by your feet, your partner holds the child under the arms. Throughout the exercise, your partner keeps a straight back and bends his/her knees to follow the child's movements.

Child's position: Sitting on your feet, facing your partner.

Movement

1. Raise and lower your feet, bending and straightening your knees.

VARIATION

After you have lifted the child, your partner raises him/her overhead, then gently sets him/her back on your feet, and you start again.

FUN TIP

The child is flying to the moon. Chant the countdown for each takeoff: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, Blast off!



UP! DOWN! ▲

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent.

Child's position: Sitting on your lower abdomen, facing you. Hold your child under the arms.

Movement

1. Push your lower back firmly into the floor, tightening your abs and glutes.

2. Raise **your hips**, keeping your feet and shoulders on the floor. **Do not bend your back.**
3. Contract your abs and glutes as long as you can, without holding your breath.
4. Slowly return to your starting position.



➔ As of age 1 or when your child can hold on tight to you while you move

BIONIC BABY ●

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent, arms stretched above your head. Hold your child's feet in your hands.

Partner's position: Standing by your head, your partner holds the child under the arms. Throughout the exercise, your partner keeps a straight back and bends his/her knees to follow the child's movements.

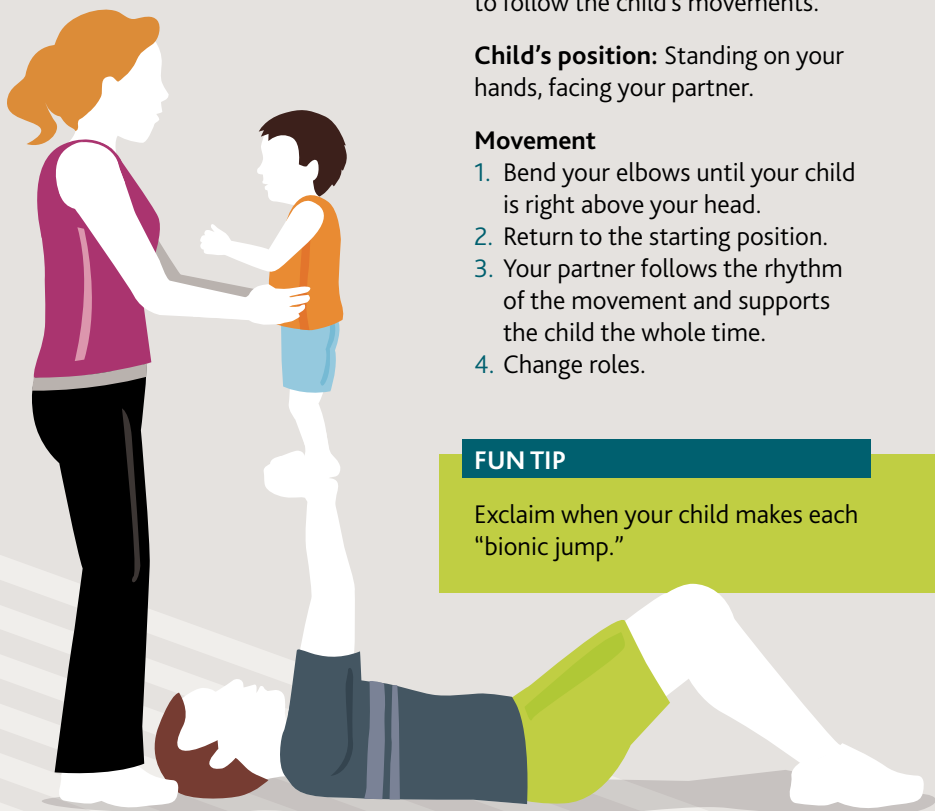
Child's position: Standing on your hands, facing your partner.

Movement

1. Bend your elbows until your child is right above your head.
2. Return to the starting position.
3. Your partner follows the rhythm of the movement and supports the child the whole time.
4. Change roles.

FUN TIP

Exclaim when your child makes each "bionic jump."



CRAB ▲

Parent's position: Facing toward the ceiling, hands and feet on the floor behind you.

Child's position: Straddling your abdomen, legs on either side of your waist. **Make sure that your child is holding tightly onto your shoulders or your clothes.**



Movement

Level A

1. Slowly raise your hips as high as you can, then lower them without touching the floor.

Level B

1. Walk like a crab, making sure that only your hands and feet are touching the floor. Make sure that your child is holding tightly onto your shoulders or your clothes.

FUN TIP

Pretend to be a giant crab. Make up stories about the ocean where you live.

ELEVATOR ▲

Parent's position: Sitting on a chair, your back straight, elbows close to your body, holding your child by the waist.

Child's position: Sitting with his/her back to you, leaning against you.

Movement

Level A

1. Raise your child until his/her head comes level with yours. **Keep your back straight while tightening your abs and avoid leaning forward.**
2. Lower your child to the starting position, keeping your back straight.

Level B

1. Raise your child above your head, straightening your arms upward.
2. Lower your child to the starting position, keeping your back straight.



➔ As of age 2

AIRPLANE ●

Parent's position: Lying on your back, legs bent above your stomach, soles of your feet toward the ceiling.

Child's position: Lying on his/her stomach, balancing on the soles of your feet, holding your hands. Your child should be in balance above you.



Movement

Level A

1. Straighten your legs above you while holding your child's hands.
2. Bend your legs to return to the starting position.

Level B

1. Same movement as in level A, but keeping your child in balance without holding his/her hands. Your child can hold onto your ankles for support.

NOTE

Make sure that there is an adequate buffer area around you.

BACKPACK ▲

Parent's position: Sitting on the floor, legs half bent and slightly apart.

Child's position: On your back, arms around your neck and legs around your waist.

Movement

1. **Slowly** bend your body forward. **Keep your back straight and your abs engaged.**
2. Hold the position as long as possible.
3. **Gently** return to the starting position.



HANDS TO FEET ●

Parent's position: Lying on your back, legs slightly bent above you, arms at your sides, bent at 90° and palms up.

Child's position: Standing on the palms of your hands, your child holds your feet. He/she must stay perfectly stiff.

Movement

1. Extend your arms upward.
2. Return to the starting position.



NOTE

It is safer to do this exercise with your legs against a wall. Hold a younger child (two or three years), by the knees instead of by the feet. It will be easier for him/her to keep legs and body stiff.

DRAWBRIDGE ▲

Parent's position: On all fours.

Child's position: On all fours, next to you.

Movement

1. Bend and straighten your arms while **tightening your abs** so that **your body stays straight**. **Keep your head in line with your upper body**.
2. Each time you return to the starting position, your child must pass underneath your stomach.

NOTE

When you master these push-ups, you can gradually move your knees back, keeping your body in a straight line from shoulders to knees.



SPLASH IN THE CANAL ●

Parent's position: Sitting on a chair, back straight.

Child's position: Straddling your knees, facing you. Hold your child's hands firmly.

Movement

1. Lift your heels off the floor.
2. Return to the starting position.
3. Repeat the exercise about 15 times, keeping your back straight. For the 16th, spread your knees so that your child falls between them.



FUN TIP

You can say "giddyup" each time you raise your heels, "faster, faster!" as you speed up, and "splash in the canal!" when your child falls between your knees.

SACK OF POTATOES ●

Parent's position: Standing, back straight.

Child's position: On your back, arms around your neck and legs around your waist.

Movement

Level A

1. Walk around, keeping your knees slightly bent.
2. Sit down and stand up as often as you can during your walk.

Level B

1. Same movement as in level A, but take bigger steps and bend your front knee more deeply.



VARIATION

You can also stand your child on your feet, either facing you or facing forward. Holding onto each other firmly, take the biggest steps you can take.

➔ As of age 3

ROWING ▲

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent.

Child's position: Sitting facing you, knees bent beneath yours. Hold your child's hands.

Movement

1. **Push your lower back into the floor, tightening your abs and glutes.** Slowly raise your head and shoulders to reach a half-sitting position while your child leans back toward the floor.
2. Return to the starting position.

VARIAION: Pass the ball

Both of you are lying down, knees bent, holding each other by the ankles. Pull yourselves up slowly and simultaneously to a half-sitting position. Whichever of you has the ball passes it to the other.



WHEELBARROW ▲

Parent's position: Standing, knees slightly bent, upper body leaning forward, holding your child by the thighs.

Child's position: Hands on the floor in line with shoulders, arms straight, parent holding him/her by the thighs. **The child's body must be in a straight line.**

Movement

Level A

1. **Tighten your abs.**
2. Make your child walk forward, taking steps with his/her hands.

Level B

1. Same movement as level A, but hold the child's ankles instead of his/her thighs. **Make sure that your child's abs are strong enough to keep his/her body in a straight line.**



SPIDER ●

Parent's position: Standing, feet in line with your shoulders, knees slightly bent, holding your child's forearms.

Child's position: Standing facing you.

Movement

Level A

1. Your child climbs you as high as possible.
2. Raise your arms to help your child climb.
3. Your child jumps carefully to the floor, returning to the starting position.

Level B

1. Same movement as for level A, but your child climbs down by walking backwards to the starting position.





ROBOT LEGS ▲

Parent's position: Lying on your stomach, supporting your chin with your hands, right knee bent at a 90° angle.

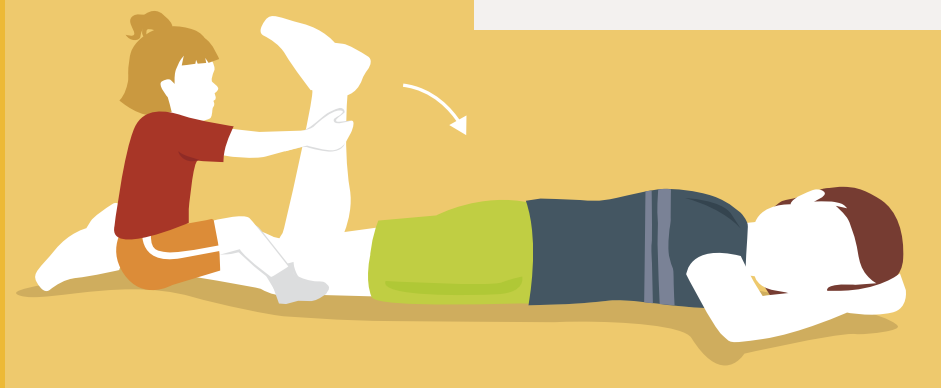
Child's position: Straddling your right thigh, facing your feet. He/she holds your ankle firmly with both hands.

Movement

1. **Tightening your abs**, try to bring your right foot to the floor. Your child provides the resistance that holds you back.
2. Hold the position as long as possible.
3. Repeat with the other leg.

VARIATION

You are in the same starting position but your child is sitting at your feet and holding your ankle firmly with both hands. Try to bring your ankle to your hip. Your child provides resistance by holding you back. Hold the position as long as possible. Repeat the exercise with your left leg.



HOT POTATO ▲

Parent's position: Standing, feet in line with your shoulders, holding a ball in front of you.

Child's position: Standing, feet in line with his/her shoulders, back to you.

Movement

1. **Without moving your feet and while engaging your abs**, turn toward each other (to the right for you; to the left for your child) and pass the ball back and forth.
2. Without moving your feet, turn the other way and pass the ball back and forth.
3. Pass the ball in the other direction.



VARIATION

Pass the ball between your legs, bending your knees and leaning forward.



WHERE ARE YOU? ●

Parent's position: On all fours, leaning on your elbows.

Child's position: In the same position, behind you.

Movement

1. Straighten one leg (left for your child; right for you).
2. Your leg must be in line with your back.
3. Your foot and your child's must touch, then return to the starting position.
4. Repeat with the other leg.



BICYCLE BUILT ▲ FOR TWO

Parent's position: Lying on your back, leaning on your elbows, hands below your hips, palms down.

Child's position: In the same position, facing you, with the soles of his/her feet against yours.

Movement

1. **Engage your abs.**
2. Pedal slowly (alternately bend and straighten each leg) keeping your feet in contact with your child's.



VARIATION

Hold a ball with your feet and, without dropping it, bring it toward you, then toward your child (bend and straighten both legs at once).



BRIDGE ▲

Parent's position: Lying on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor, arms by your sides.

Child's position: In the same position, next to you.

Movement

1. Engage your abs and glutes.
2. Slowly lift your hips, then your back off the floor. Only your head, shoulders and feet should be touching the floor
3. Hold this position for a few seconds.
4. Return to the starting position.
5. Relax before starting again.



FUN TIP

Pretend that a ship is floating beneath the bridge. Imitate the sound of a ship. Tell a story about the ship, where it is going, where it is coming from, etc.

GRASSHOPPERS ●

Parent's position: Standing, feet in line with shoulders.

Child's position: In the same position.

Movement

1. Starting at an imaginary line, take a long jump from a standing position.
2. Your child stands where your heels touched the floor and takes a similar jump.
3. Keep playing as long as you can, trying to jump farther each time.



VARIATION

Change it up: let your child jump first and you jump second.

SUPERMAN ▲

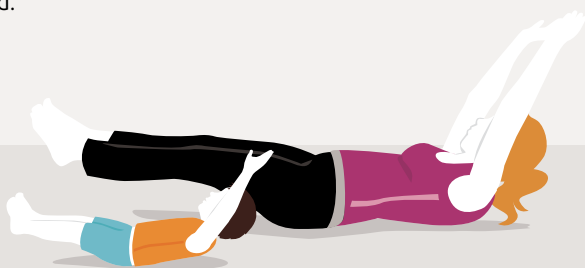
Parent's starting position: Lying on your stomach, **legs and upper body slightly raised**, one arm stretched forward and the other at your waist, like Superman.

Child's starting position: In the same position, next to you.



Movement

1. **Engage your abs.**
2. **Without letting your feet touch the floor**, roll onto your back in the direction of your outstretched arm.
3. While on your back, keeping your legs and upper body slightly elevated, stretch your arms over your head.
4. Switch the position of your arms so that your opposite arm is now stretched above your head.
5. Without letting your feet touch the floor, return to your Superman position, rolling in the direction of your outstretched arm.



③ Last, slow down and relax!

End your session with a period of relaxation. Your child might be restless after "playing exercise" with you. Put on some soft music and slowly swing or vibrate your arms and legs. Breathe deeply, massage your child or tell a story.

4 At a glance

From birth

WASHING WINDOWS ● p.10



PUSH AND PULL ● p.11



PEEK-A-BOO PUSH-UPS ▲ p.11



CUCKOO CLOCK ▲ p.12



VERRRRRRY TALL ▲ p.12



SWING ● p.13



ROLL ▲ p.13



LITTLE DOG ● p.14



As of 4 months

SKI LIFT ▲ p.15



AROUND THE WORLD ▲ p.15



BABY ELEVATOR ● p.16



ROBOT ARMS ▲ p.16



TRACTOR RIDE ▲ p.17



CRADLE ▲ p.17



As of 6 months

PROMENADE-SAFARI ● p.18



GOING TO THE MOON ● p.19



UP! DOWN! ▲ p.19



As of age 1

BIONIC BABY ● p.20



CRAB ▲ p.21



ELEVATOR ▲ p.21



AIRPLANE ● p.22



BACKPACK ▲ p.22



HANDS TO FEET ● p.23



DRAWBRIDGE ▲ p.23



SPLASH IN THE CANAL ● p.24



SACK OF POTATOES ● p.24



ROWING ▲ p.25



WHEELBARROW ▲ p.25



SPIDER ● p.26



ROBOT LEGS ▲ p.27



HOT POTATO ▲ p.28



WHERE ARE YOU? ● p.29



BICYCLE BUILT FOR TWO ▲ p.29



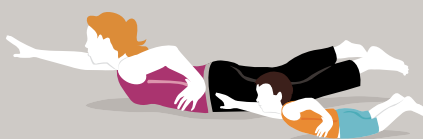
BRIDGE ▲ p.30



GRASSHOPPERS ● p.30



SUPERMAN ▲ p.31



Being active right from birth

As soon as they are born, children begin to use their bodies to discover the world around them. Acquiring gross motor skills helps children develop their sense of competence and belief in their own effectiveness with regard to their motor development. It is therefore important to start very early providing children with opportunities to use their motor skills successfully, thus building their confidence in their own physical abilities. They will learn to move with ease, with the result that they will really enjoy practicing physical activities. It also seems that children who have fully developed their gross motor skills are more likely to be physically active in their youth and to stay that way when they become adults.

MOTOR SKILLS AT THE HEART OF ALL LEARNING

Gross motor skills include locomotor skills (e.g. crawling, walking and running) as well as basic movement skills (e.g. throwing, catching, pushing, pulling, dribbling and juggling). Acquiring these skills sets the stage for the development of fine and more complex motor skills (e.g. using cutlery to eat, colouring, fastening a button, lacing up shoes). If a young child does not acquire gross motor skills and good muscle tone, it will have a negative effect on his/her overall development.

With the help of the adults around them, children acquire, according to a predetermined sequence but always at their own pace, the motor skills that will affect the development of the following competencies:

- affective competence, through the independence their movement skills afford them
- social competence, through their ability to play with their peers
- intellectual competence, by exploring and adapting to their environment

STIMULATION EXERCISES ADAPTED TO YOUR CHILD'S LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Your child is unique and is evolving at his/her own pace. In the following table, you will see the motor skills your child might acquire, according to his/her age, as well as stimulation activities to foster development of these skills.²

². It is perfectly normal for two children to show skill development differences of 6 to 8 months between them.

	YOUR CHILD DISCOVERS THE WORLD AND LEARNS TO...	TO STIMULATE AND ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD...
ABOUT 0 TO 4 MONTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • react to external stimuli • hold an object you put in his/her hand (e.g. holding your finger) • turn his/her head from side to side and hold it at a 45° angle for at least 30 seconds while lying on his/her tummy • watch an object move from left to right and right to left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smile at him/her as often as possible • gently bring your child up to a sitting position, holding his/her hands and supporting his/her head less and less • when your baby is lying on his/her back, help him/her look at a mobile and reach for it • massage your baby at bath time
ABOUT 4 TO 6 MONTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grasp and hold an object you offer him/her • play with his/her hands, look at them, put them in his/her mouth • control his/her head • raise himself/herself using his/her hands, arms straight, while lying on his/her tummy • put things in his/her mouth • transfer toys from one hand to the other • sit up with minimum support, keeping his/her head and back straight for a few seconds • roll over onto his/her back and, later, onto his/her tummy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change your child's position often: back, tummy, sitting up in a safe place • sit up your child, back not supported, holding his/her hands • when your child is sitting up in a safe place, offer him/her small toys to pick up
ABOUT 6 TO 12 MONTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sit in a highchair • transfer objects from one hand to the other • throw objects on the floor • sit up straight, back unsupported • crawl backwards and forwards • pick up small objects between his/her thumb and index finger • crawl • squat and bend over • stand up without help while holding onto the furniture • move sideways, holding onto the furniture or a wall • put objects in a container • walk while you hold his/her hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have your child support himself/herself with his/her hands while you hold his/her thighs • sit your child up and pull him/her to standing while holding his/her hands, arms raised overhead • have your child pick up small objects • place objects and toys at a distance so that your child must move to pick them up • show your child how to crawl while resting his/her chest on a ball • have your child play with a big ball (manipulate, throw, roll along the floor) • help your child walk by holding him/her under the arms and, later, by the hands • have your child walk while pushing an object

YOUR CHILD DISCOVERS
THE WORLD AND LEARNS TO...

- walk alone
- feed himself/herself with a spoon
- climb
- climb stairs on all fours and, later, go back down in the same position or sitting on his/her bum
- sit alone on a small chair
- look at a picture book, turning two or three pages at a time
- turn a doorknob

TO STIMULATE AND
ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD...

- have your child wash and dry his/her hands
- have your child climb on the sofa or a chair, with supervision
- teach your child to pick up the toys
- encourage your child to imitate your movements
- let him/her run
- give your child a shape sorter so he/she can put the different shapes in the corresponding slots
- have your child play with a ball (manipulate, throw, roll along the floor)
- have your child put small cubes into bigger ones, balls into holes or rings on a cone

- climb the stairs, putting both feet on each step, while you hold his/her hand
- run, stop, start again
- jump
- prance or skip
- push a ball along with his/her foot without falling down
- squat to pick up an object and, later, to stand up easily
- throw a ball

- let your child help you undress him/her
- let your child fasten safety straps (highchair, booster seat, doll stroller, car seat, etc.)
- have your child string together large wooden beads or spools of thread
- play outside together
- when your child stops for a rest, teach him/her to sit cross-legged, keeping his/her back straight

- jump with both feet together, without support
- kick a ball while running
- walk on tiptoe
- stand on one foot for a few seconds
- climb the stairs one foot after the other, holding a handrail
- hold a drinking glass or cup with one hand
- catch a ball rolling along the ground
- move his/her fingers separately
- toss a ball to an adult
- hold a pair of scissors
- turn the pages of a book one at a time

- provide clothes that are easy to put on and encourage your child to get dressed and undressed alone
- have your child walk on his/her hands while you hold his/her thighs or ankles
- give your child building blocks
- encourage your child to imitate your movements: dance to music together, walk on tiptoe or on your heels
- have your child cut out large pieces of paper and, later, smaller pieces
- every day, give your child paper and crayons to draw with
- give your child modelling clay

YOUR CHILD DISCOVERS THE WORLD AND LEARNS TO...

TO STIMULATE AND ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD...

ABOUT 3 TO 4 YEARS

- ride a tricycle
- walk in cadence
- walk a straight line drawn on the floor, placing one foot in front of the other
- hop forward on one foot
- go down the stairs one foot after the other
- become better and better at catching a ball with outstretched arms
- button and unbutton the clothes on a doll, for example
- get dressed with help
- put on his/her shoes

- dance to music with your child
- have your child jump over small obstacles
- have your child be the goalkeeper while you roll a ball toward him/her
- have your child toss a ball from his/her right to left hand
- have your child pour water from one cup to another without spilling any
- teach your child to lace and unlace a shoe, for example
- teach your child to colour

ABOUT 4 TO 5 YEARS

- throw a ball to the ground and against the wall
- ride a bicycle with training wheels
- hop on one foot, gallop
- make different kinds of jumps
- run up the stairs
- walk like an adult, swinging his/her arms
- cut along a straight line
- hit, with a bat, a gently tossed ball
- move forward and backward easily while walking or running, taking sideways steps, changing speed or direction

- play catch, moving farther and farther apart
- have your child walk forward and backward along a line
- have your child walk with a light object on his/her head (e.g. a plastic plate or cup)
- teach your child the difference between right and left
- have your child play with a blanket and pretend to be a cloud, tornado, ghost, bird, etc.
- invent games in which your child must stand in balance on a stone, curb, line, crack, board, etc.
- teach your child to button a button
- teach your child to tie his/her shoelaces



SOME ADVICE AND SAFETY TIPS

- Each child is unique; everyone grows and develops at their own pace. Avoid comparing your child to other children. The activities presented here for each age group are merely suggestions.
- The activities that stimulate one child might bore another. Regularly check whether your child is still interested, be aware of his/her reactions and remember that his/her tastes and interests can change quickly. Do not insist if your child seems tired or less interested. You can try again later. Remember: the goal is to have fun together!
- Make sure that you always play the games and do the exercises in a safe, reassuring and stimulating environment.
 - > **Safety.** It is important to bear in mind basic safety principles when planning activities. These principles should not, however, inhibit your child from exploring and having fun.
Children are careful by nature. If an adult respects the child's pace, they will not try exercises that are too dangerous. Children become bolder as they develop the motor skills to handle a situation, but they become reckless if they are pushed beyond their limits.
 - > **Attachment.** Attachment is the emotional bond that gradually forms between you and your child. This bond gets stronger as your child understands that he/she can trust you and that you are there to provide comfort. Your child learns to count on you when needed, while developing the confidence needed to explore his/her environment.
This bond will help your child to become autonomous and to feel comfortable facing new challenges. He/she will still need to be guided and supported in his/her explorations.
 - > **Motivation.** In "playing exercise," your child will discover the pleasure of being active and the satisfaction of doing well. In addition, your child's motivation will come from past successes and the knowledge that he/she can succeed again.

Your encouragement and constructive comments will influence your child's self-confidence and perception of his/her own abilities. Do not hesitate to provide a stimulating environment adapted to your child's level, and to suggest variations and new challenges.





Did you know...

By taking up playtime, the small screen hinders young children in the natural exploration of their environment, which is essential to their development. In addition, experts now recognize that young children's television-watching habits affect weight gain and the development of basic motor skills.

Besides, most children would prefer to engage in their favourite activities, especially with their parents, instead of spending long periods in front of the small screen. By "playing exercise" daily, you will be responding to your child's needs while reducing the time spent being sedentary.

SPECIALISTS RECOMMEND THAT

No child, from birth to 5 years of age, should be sedentary, held or kept inactive for more than an hour at a time, except when sleeping.

To conclude

Take daily opportunities to be active with your child. You will soon feel the many physical and psychological benefits, while creating special family memories.

Don't forget that children learn by imitation. By being active, you are giving your child a love of playing and moving vigorously. Your child will love discovering the world of physical activity!

Remember that every child is unique. Respect your child's pace and interests for the goal is to spend quality time together. Show your child how much you enjoy spending time with him/her. And remember: **IT'S PLAYTIME!** It should be fun for everyone.

Have fun!



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