Supporting Exercise and Movement

As a parent of a toddler, you've probably noticed by now how much your child likes to move around. From kicking legs while sitting at the table during a meal, to dancing while listening to music, young children spend most of the day moving their body.

Toddlers are learning to master large body movements like walking up and down steps, running, jumping, and dancing. They also explore their environment through physical movement and play. You can promote your child's development by providing them opportunities to exercise and move their body.

DEC Recommended Practices: Environment 1–3, 6

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ecta Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Getting Your Child On the Move

- Make sure you provide time each day to encourage active child play and movement (indoors and outdoors). Think about your child's daily schedule. Does he have enough time to play outdoors? What kinds of opportunities do they have to move their body indoors? Are there opportunities for him to walk, run, and climb? Try to find time in the morning and afternoon for him to run outdoors.
- Are there different materials that encourage them to move their body indoors and outdoors? Are there things she can throw, roll, push, and pull? It's helpful to watch your child to identify the types of physical movement your child is doing so you can encourage them to use other types of movement.
- Engage your child in movement and exercise as part of everyday activities. Be creative! This can be as simple as encouraging your child to take clothes out of the dryer and push the laundry basket up and down the hallway. You can invite your toddler to stack cans of food while you prepare a meal. If getting your child to transition from one activity to another is challenging, try adding a movement to the activity. Invite your toddler to hop like a bunny or gallop like a horse when going from one activity to another.
- Use music, nursery rhymes, and other activities to encourage physical movement and exercise. Think about times during the day when your child needs to wait. Are there songs and finger plays that could be used to engage in movement while he waits for an activity?
- Be sure movement activities match your child's age and abilities. Think about how they participates in different physical activities and what they need to support and increase their participation.
- If your child has a disability, you might want to talk with an early interventionist about using assistive technology or adaptations for activities that would support your child's physically activity.

A Quick Peek

Kayce is a busy 2-year-old who loves playing outdoors and reading books about animals.

Her mother, Dani, recently chatted with a friend, Sara, about her difficulties when taking Kayce grocery shopping. Kayce screams and cries when it's time to get in her car seat or ride in a shopping cart.

Sara offers to go with Dani and Kayce on their next shopping trip. She notices that while Kayce can look at books in the cart, but she gets frustrated when her mom is unable to stop and read to her while she shops.

Sara helps Dani think about ways to support Kayce during shopping trips. They talk about Kayce's need to play outdoors, and Dani has the idea to take her to the park before going shopping. If the weather is bad, she plans to take a toy shopping cart and ask Kayce to put items in it. This will create more opportunities for Kayce to move and be involved in grocery shopping.

During the car ride, Dani engages Kayce in singing songs with movement, such as *Wheels on the Bus* and *Row Your Boat*.

Within two weeks, Dani notices less crying and frustration during shopping trips. Kayce is excited pushing her little cart through the store and loading it with items they choose. She even helps her mom put away some of the groceries at home. Dani feels less stress after shopping, and she is learning even more ways to allow Kayce to move and be active.

Signs of Success

- Your child is engaged in movement activities throughout the day
- Your child gets excited about participating in movement activities
- Your child is learning new movement skills



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Project Officer: Julia Martin Eile

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