



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ♥ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Your Growing Child's Large Muscle Physical Development

Young children grow very quickly. During infancy (birth–18 months) and toddlerhood (18–36 months), physical changes and the capabilities that come with them are especially noticeable—one day, your child may not be able to roll over, and the next day she can. Before you know it, she's able to sit up on her own, then crawl, and walk. In the preschooler years (36–48 months), physical growth may be more subtle. It takes the form of greater refinement of large and small muscle development which allows her to gain better control of her body's movements and functions.

It's important to remember that young children must learn the skills that are second-nature to older children and adults. Most young children acquire new abilities and skills in about the same order, even if not at the same pace. For example, they roll over before they sit, and sit before they stand. They usually gain control of their large muscles (e.g., neck, arms, legs) before their small muscles (e.g., fingers, hands, facial muscles).



Your child needs repeated practice and encouragement to gain the confidence she needs to develop new skills. This newsletter provides some information and activities to help you support your child's large muscle development and have fun with her in the process.

In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.



1-10-6/15

Infants

Babies are sensory learners. Even before they can crawl and walk, babies are using their senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling—to interpret everything around them and to begin to copy what they learn from these experiences. Babies need lots of practice and encouragement to support their physical development and learning of new skills. For example, before they can crawl, pull themselves up, or walk, they need to gain strength in their leg muscles and learn to coordinate their arm and leg movements.

The following are ways that you can help your baby’s physical development:

- ♥ If your baby is not yet able to move around on her own, change her position often so she can see her surroundings at a different angle.
- ♥ Encourage your baby to crawl by placing her on her hands and knees and gently rocking her back and forth. Don’t be surprised if she scoots backward first.

- ♥ Encourage your baby to pull herself up by placing a toy on a sturdy chair, sofa, or on a low table that has no sharp corners. You’ll soon see your child let go and stand alone for several seconds while playing with her toy.



Activity for Infants: *Fun with Bubbles*

Materials:

- A soft blanket, *futon*, or beach towel
- A bottle of bubbles

What to Do:

1. Place your baby on a soft blanket, *futon*, or towel on the floor to give her a chance to look at new things.
2. Change her position or the position of the blanket, *futon*, or towel on the floor after a few minutes.
3. With your baby lying in her back, begin to blow bubbles in the air.
4. Encourage your infant to move her arms by showing her how to swat the bubbles.



Variation: Sit on the floor and hold her upright on your lap as you blow bubbles. Encourage her to reach out for the bubbles. If your baby is able to sit in a position supported by her arms, protect her from falling forward on her face as she reaches out for the bubbles.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

As your toddler begins to walk, she may be unsteady. Her balance and coordination are still developing. But now that she's more mobile, there are more opportunities for her to explore, and exploration is a great way for her to learn.

Encourage your child's efforts as she's becoming more mobile. Have fun with your child; create games that help her work to build her large muscles, balance, and coordination. The following are ways that you can help your toddler's physical development.

- ♥ If you have a push toy with a long handle, encourage your child to stand and hold the toy by its handle. Encourage her to walk while pushing the toy. If you have a stroller, let her hold onto the stroller and push it around at home or at the park.



- ♥ Once your child has mastered walking, show your child how to walk on tiptoes. Ask her to stand on tiptoes. Hold her hands if she needs help balancing.
- ♥ Show your toddler how to jump up and down with two feet. Hold hands and jump up and down together. Count the number of times she can jump then have her count the number of times you can jump together.

Activity for Toddlers: *Beach Ball Play*

Materials:

Air-filled beach balls or other very light-weight ball

What to Do:

1. Show your child how to swat the ball to keep it afloat in the air.
2. Challenge your child to keep her ball from touching the floor.
3. Together, count the number of times she swats the ball or take turns hitting the ball towards each other.

Variation for more than one child: Encourage children to swat the balls back and forth to one another. How long can they do so without touching the floor?

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)



Preschoolers

As your preschooler gains more control over her large muscles, she will have better coordination and balance, and you can see this as she tries to run as fast as she can or jump high into the air, even if it's only a few inches off the ground! She may always seem to be on the move, and never seem to get tired. While actively playing, your child is developing and strengthening her large (and small) muscles and coordination.

You can help your child's physical development with the following activities:

- ♥ Set out some "stepping stones" for your children. Use paper plates or folded newspaper and lay them on the floor; tape them down to prevent slipping. Place them close enough to step on them, but far enough apart to be a challenge. Make up a scenario such as pretending she is walking on the stones to avoid stepping on mud. Tell your child that the goal is to get across all the stones without getting muddy.

- ♥ Make two parallel lines on the ground with pieces of rope or string. Have your child hop from one rope to the other. You can widen the gap between the ropes as your child is able to hop from one to the other with ease.



Activities for Preschoolers: *Obstacle Course*

Materials:

Items around the house (e.g., pillows, masking tape, paper plates, large cardboard box)

What to Do:

1. Create an obstacle course for your child to complete. Here are a few ideas using items from around the house
 - Use pillows to create a hill to crawl *over*.
 - Create a tunnel to crawl *through* using a large cardboard box with both ends open.
 - Make straight and jagged lines using tape on the floor as a path for children to walk on top of.
 - Tape paper plates on the floor and have children hop from plate to plate.
 - Hold up a hula hoop for children to climb *through* or place the hoop on the floor for children to jump *into*.
2. Expand your child's vocabulary by using a variety of position words when demonstrating the obstacle course or describing the movements that she is doing. (Position words are italicized above.)

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles such as neck, arms, and legs
- ♥ Learn to use her body with intention

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Recognize herself as separate from others
- ♥ Feel important and good about herself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening, and understanding skills, and attention span
- ♥ Learn to interact with others

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Begin to explore distance and space
- ♥ Begin to understand cause and effect

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show her how to safely handle the items and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

Shake 'Em Up Cake

Adapted from <http://extension.usu.edu/Morgan/>

Cake:

- 2 eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup oil
- ½ cup orange juice
- 1 cup flour
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp salt

Frosting:

- 1½ cups powdered sugar
- 3 T orange juice

Instructions:

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees and grease a 8"x8" pan.
2. Break eggs into a quart-sized jar and screw the lid on tightly.
3. Have your child shake the jar 10 times. Count aloud while she shakes it.
4. Together, add the remaining ingredients into the jar and screw the lid on tightly.
5. Taking turns and counting together, help your child shake the jar 40 times or until smooth.
6. Pour the mixture into the greased pan and bake for 20–25 minutes.
7. While the cake is baking, you can make an icing for the cake by mixing the powdered sugar and the 3 T of orange juice. Once the cake is cooled, spread the frosting on it.

Community Resources

Zero to Three

<http://main.zerotothree.org/>

Research-based information that describes health and development of infants and toddlers. Search the “Early Development” tab for podcasts, tips, and common questions that relate to young children’s development.

Easter Seals Hawaii

<http://hawaii.easterseals.com>

Search the “Early Intervention” tab for information on Easter Seals services in Hawaii. If you suspect that your child has developmental delays, tell your physician and she/he may refer to you an early intervention agency such as Easter Seals.

Safe Kids USA

<http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/>

You will find the top tips every parent needs to keep kids safe. The information is broken down by age and then organized into three categories (at home, at play, and on the way).



Suggested Books

Recommended by **Hawaii State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

I Love You Stinky Face by Lisa McCourt

A mother’s unconditional love is tested when her imaginative son turns himself into a meat-eating dinosaur, a one-eyed monster and much, much more before being satisfied with the fact that no matter how stinky he is or how ferocious he could possibly be, he will always be loved.

Good Night Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann

Taking the zookeeper’s keys, a clever gorilla opens each cage and lets the animals out to follow the zookeeper home.

Preschoolers

Bark, George by Jules Feiffer

A puppy’s mother is in for a big surprise when she takes him to the veterinarian to find out why he does not bark.

Bear Snores On by Karma Wilson

With lyrical rhyming text and delightful oversized illustrations, this story follows a group of animals who gather to party in the cave of a sleeping bear on a cold winter night.



Learning to Grow is a project of the Center on the Family at the University of Hawai‘i, College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources, with funding from the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services. www.learningtogrowhawaii.org