



**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime

# Magic of Everyday Moments: Busy Bodies

The first 3 years of life represent a period of rapid growth and development. Through exploration, infants and toddlers work hard to develop and strengthen physical skills which typically develop in a predictable order. For example, young children roll over before they can sit independently, sit independently before they can crawl, and crawl before they can walk. All this happens in just a few months! Just imagine all the effort and energy necessary for physical development. To nurture your young child's physical development, observe your child, notice how she is always in motion, and provide opportunities for her to stay active with activities like the ones below.

## **To exercise large body muscles for non-mobile infants:**

- Exercise back and neck muscles by placing a toy or interesting object in front of your child and moving it from side to side.
- Practice reaching and grasping with your child by placing a toy or interesting object in front of him while he is face down.
- Encourage your child to roll over by placing toys and interesting objects out of reach.

## **To exercise hand muscles:**

- Play "pat-a-cake" with your child and help her clap to the song.
- When your child is ready for solids, practice picking up finger foods by providing bite-sized food during mealtime.
- Let your child practice using eating utensils during mealtime when ready and motivate him to self-feed.
- When your child is old enough, use play dough, or use crayons and paint brushes to draw and paint together.



## **To exercise large body muscles for children who walk and run:**

- Stack large blocks and boxes.
- Practice going up and down stairs with your child.
- Provide a safe and secure environment where your child can run and jump at home.
- Have fun outdoors!

## **Practice and instill healthy habits from an early age:**

- Stay healthy and prevent illness by washing hands before a meal or when returning home.
- Have a set bedtime and allow for some quiet time before turning in.

Active play is necessary for the development of your child's physical development. Provide opportunities for active play by providing a loving and supportive environment that encourages exploration. When children feel supported they are likely to move their bodies and stimulate their physical motor muscles. Share your ideas, questions, and feelings about physical development and the Magic of Everyday Moments video, [\*Busy Bodies: How the Development of Physical Skills Supports Learning\*](#) with another parent or person you trust with these discussion starters:



- How was your physical development supported when you were a child?
- What healthy habits did you learn as a child?
- Do you have any concerns about your child's physical development? Do you feel comfortable seeking help from someone you know or from a health care provider?

Remember that young children develop and grow at different rates. For instance, some walk earlier than others. Consult your health care provider if you have any doubts or concerns about your child's development.

### Additional Resources:

- Your Baby's Development: Birth to 3 Months, 3 to 6 Months, 6 to 9 Months, 9 to 12 Months, 12 to 15 Months, 15 to 18 Months, 18 to 24 Months, 24 to 30 Months, 30 to 36 Months  
[www.zerotothree.org/resources/201-busy-bodies-how-the-development-of-physical-skills-supports-learning](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources/201-busy-bodies-how-the-development-of-physical-skills-supports-learning)
- News You Can Use: Foundations of School Readiness: Physical Development and Health  
[eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/docs/nycu-foundations-sr-physical-dev-health.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/docs/nycu-foundations-sr-physical-dev-health.pdf)