

POINTERS FOR PARENTS

Keep your youngsters on the go

Here's news that many parents may find moving:

Clearly movement is very important for helping children grow healthy and strong. However, as children explore and interact with the world through movement, they are also developing thinking and communications skills, as well as self-confidence.

Children feel competent both physically and emotionally when they use their bodies to communicate and solve problems. Children learn problem-solving skills as they try different actions - climbing up, over, in or through. Movement is also one of the earliest ways children express their thoughts and feelings.

Perhaps most important, through movement children can develop a closer bond with their parents. There are many fun ways you can encourage your youngsters to get moving.

- ***Follow their movements.*** Babies and toddlers love it when you imitate them. It makes them feel important.
- ***Put your baby on his belly*** to help him develop coordination between upper and lower body and support muscle and motor development.
- ***Put on different types of music*** and move to the beat with your young child in your arms. Encourage your toddler to move to music on her own. Children this age often do not change their movements to match the music, they respond to their own internal rhythm.
- ***Describe your child's actions*** as she dances to the music. "Look how you bounce to the beat." This not only helps her learn new words, but also instills a sense of pride that her actions are noticed!
- ***Create an "obstacle course"*** that encourages your toddler to use a variety of skills. Have boxes set up for him to crawl through, pillows to climb on and blocks to run around. Doing the course over and over helps your child learn to organize his actions to reach a goal.
- ***Songs like The Itsy Bitsy Spider*** can help develop the use of fingers and hands.
- ***In the sandbox,*** offer your child different size pails and shovels to help her practice using her fingers and hands.
- ***Play with balls of all sizes.*** Figure out together which ones are best to kick, throw, play catch with and roll on.
- ***Act out stories*** using movement and dance. Good themes include animal stories marching bands and fantasy images such as fairies and superheroes.

These suggestions come from the experts at ZERO TO THREE. You can learn more online at www.zerotothree.org

- **AND,** we have one more - ***Take your child out on walks*** (without the stroller). Starting the healthy habit of walking early in life is a great way to support healthy physical, emotional and cognitive development.