

FUN and PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



**For Families and Caregivers
with Children 0 - 4 years**

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2 HAVING FUN

Walking, biking, swimming, playing, dancing, hiking. There are many ways you and your children can have fun and be physically active together.

Being active together benefits you and your children. It helps children improve balance, co-ordination, strength, endurance and confidence. They will sleep well too! It also helps children maintain a healthy weight, and sets them on the road to life-long physical activity. And, as they become adults, being physically active will help prevent heart and bone disease, cancer and diabetes.

Feeling too tired, too stressed, too homebound to exercise? Remember regular physical activity can be a way to meet other people. It can improve your energy level, relieve



stress and improve your stamina and endurance for daily activities. Walking, swimming or throwing a ball together can help parents and children get rid of normal feelings of frustration.

This booklet gives you some other free ideas for making exercise a fun and regular part of your time together.

Ready to get started? Try these exercises and have fun.

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TIPS FOR BEING ACTIVE

- If you have had a healthy, uncomplicated pregnancy and delivery, you can begin a mild exercise program immediately. If you have any concerns check with your caregiver (physician, midwife, nurse) before starting your program. For baby's comfort and safety move slowly in the first three months to allow for baby's lack of head control, especially when changing position.
- If you had a caesarian birth, or other complications during your pregnancy or delivery, consult your caregiver before resuming physical activity. After your postnatal exam (6-8 week check up) and with the approval of your caregiver, you may resume your exercise program or begin a new one.
- Exercise when baby is alert and in a "good mood". Wait one hour after baby has eaten before you start. If baby is tired or fussy, it's time to stop.
- Wear comfortable clothes so that you can move easily. You should wear shoes that give good support for standing or jumping.
- Exercise on a comfortable surface, a rug or mat.
- For best results, be active every day or at least three times a week.
- Try to do each exercise five times. Do not push yourself or your child any harder than is comfortable. As you improve, increase the number of times you do the exercise.

NOTE:

This booklet suggests appropriate ages to begin each exercise with your child. Remember, each child is unique and you may want to try an exercise earlier or later than the age suggested.

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LIFTING BABY:

TIPS FOR MOTHERS



After baby is born, your stomach muscles will be weak. These muscles normally support your back when you lift heavy objects so it is easy to injure your back when lifting baby, especially as baby gets heavier.

Exercises to strengthen your stomach muscles, eg. exercise four, will help protect your back and help get you in shape.

Here are some tips to help prevent aches in your back, arms and shoulders:



- As you move to lift baby, pull in your abdominal (tummy) muscles, tighten your buttocks and your pelvic floor muscles.
- Keeping your spine straight, bend your legs as shown, bring baby close to your body, and, using your thigh muscles, slowly rise to standing position.

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EXERCISE ONE:

HIP AND CALF STRETCHES

*Stretches hips and calf
(back of lower leg)
muscles.*

- Hold baby securely in your arms close to your body.
- Step forward with one leg and bend this front knee making sure the knee is not pushing out beyond the toes.
- The back leg is slightly bent and the foot is pointed forward with the heel flat on the floor.

IN THE 1ST YEAR



- Tilt your hips forward (under) to feel the stretch in the front of the hip and the calf muscles.
- Hold the stretch twenty to thirty seconds.
- Repeat with the other leg.

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EXERCISE TWO:

IN THE 1ST YEAR

BUTTERFLY BEND

*Strengthens legs
and buttocks.*

Caution:
**Avoid this exercise if
you have problems
with your knees.**

- Hold baby securely in your arms and close to your body.
- Stand with your feet slightly more than shoulder width apart and turn your feet out.
- Make sure the knees are in line with your feet and that the knees do not go beyond the toes.
- Bend your knees and slowly lower your buttocks 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 cm). Return to starting position.
- Repeat.



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EXERCISE THREE:

IN THE 1ST YEAR

BABY LIFTS

*Strengthens elbows ,
shoulders and chest.*

Caution:

**Do not do this exercise
until baby is either
5 months old or has
sufficient head control.**



- Lie on your back, knees bent, with baby laying face down on your chest.
- Support baby's hips and shoulders as shown.
- Slowly lift baby up above your chest, extending your arms, keeping elbows slightly bent.
- Hold baby up for a count of five, then lower and rest on your chest again.
- Repeat.

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EXERCISE FOUR: CURL-UPS

IN THE 1ST YEAR

Strengthens your abdominal (tummy) muscles.

Caution:

Do curl-ups only after your caregiver has checked to see that there is no separation of your abdominal muscles. Your six week postnatal visit is a good time to ask.

A

- Lie on a soft surface, knees bent, feet on the floor, holding baby securely against your thighs with both hands.
- Talk to baby as you lift your head and shoulders off the floor, tightening your tummy muscles.
- Slowly uncurl and relax.
- Repeat.



B

- Lie on your side, knees slightly bent and baby in front.
- Reach your fingers toward your feet until your shoulder comes off the floor.
- Slowly return to the starting position and repeat.
- Now change to your other side.



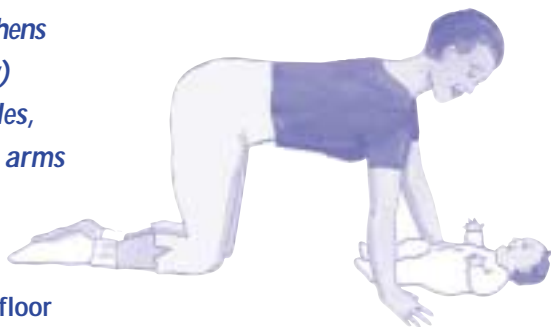
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EXERCISE
FIVE:

IN THE 1ST YEAR

ALTERNATE LEG
STRETCHES

Improves balance and coordination, strengthens abdominals (tummy) muscles, back muscles, buttocks, shoulders, arms and legs.



- Get on all fours, hands on floor under your shoulders, knees under hips, back flat. Lie baby on back as shown.
- Slowly extend one leg out behind you, keeping it at the same height as the rest of your body.



- Lower your knee back down to the floor.
- Repeat.
- Change to other leg.

EXERCISE SIX:

IN THE 1ST YEAR

LEG LIFTS

Firms and strengthens front thigh muscles.

Caution:

Do not include baby in this exercise until baby is either 5 months old or has sufficient head control.

Avoid this exercise if you are having problems with your lower back.

- Position yourself and your child securely as shown.
- Support your child's body.
- Be sure to tighten your abdominal and buttock muscles so the small of your back is flat on the floor.
- Lift your legs and hold for the count of three.



- Lower legs slowly.
- Repeat.

EXERCISE SEVEN:

IN THE 1ST YEAR

SCISSORS

*Stretches and strengthens
leg muscles.*

- Lie on your side as shown.
- Raise the top leg and hold for a count of five. Slowly lower the leg. Repeat several times on one side, then change to the other side and try the other leg.



- Raise the bottom leg and hold for a count of five. Slowly lower the leg. Repeat several times, then change to the other side.



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EXERCISE EIGHT:

FROM 12 MONTHS

ARM CIRCLES

*Strengthens arms and
shoulders of adult
and child.*

- Sit with your child and encourage him/her to slowly circle arms forward and backward.
- Change the size and speed of the circle movements.



13 EXERCISE NINE:

FROM 2 YEARS

WALKING THE LINE

*Exercises small muscles
of feet and develops
balance.*

- Place masking tape along the floor or use an imaginary line and walk the "tightrope" with your child.
- Try walking forwards, backward and sideways.



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EXERCISE TEN:

FROM 2 YEARS

FOOT FLEX

*Strengthens foot
and leg muscles.*

- Sit with legs out in front of you, knees slightly bent and lean back on hands for support.
- Stretch your toes apart.
- Then stretch your feet towards the floor while pointing your toes.



- Now keeping your legs in place, pull your toes towards your body.
- For older children, try drawing the letters of the alphabet in the air with the big toe.

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EXERCISE ELEVEN:

FROM 2 YEARS

STRETCH UP AND OUT

Stretches total body.

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart.
- Start by moving into a crouch position.
- Slowly stretch upward into a standing position and stretch your arms overhead.
- Slowly lower your arms to your side.
- Return to crouch position and repeat.



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EXERCISE TWELVE:

FROM 3 YEARS

PEEK-A-BOO PUSH UPS

*Strengthens arms,
shoulders, and chest.*



- Start down on your hands and knees, hands under shoulders, knees under hips.
- Bend your arms, lowering your face and chest toward the floor.
- Straigten arms (do not lock elbows), pushing your chest up until your back is parallel to the floor.
- Repeat.



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EXERCISE THIRTEEN:

FROM 3 YEARS

JUMP AND REACH

Strengthens legs, gives total body stretch, and improves circulation for adult and child. Child develops co-ordination and balance.

Caution:
Avoid this exercise if you have problems with your knees.

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart.
- Squat down slowly as though you are sitting in a chair. Do not lower your buttocks below your knees and do not push knees out beyond the toes.
- Jump up and raise your hands over your head.
- Repeat.



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EXERCISE FOURTEEN:

JUMP AND TWIST

Strengthens the legs and improves circulation for adult and child.

FROM 3 YEARS



- Hold hands with your child and jump up and down together as high as you can on a soft surface, a rug, mat or grass.
- Put a lot of spring into your jumps, landing with ankles and knees slightly bent.
- Now, jump on the spot with hands by your sides. Begin twisting feet and hips, pumping arms from side to side.

EXERCISE FIFTEEN:

ROCKIN' ROLLS

Stretches the back and strengthens the abdominal (tummy) muscles for adult and child.

- Sit on the floor on a rug or mat, knees bent, hands clasping under the knees.
- Rock gently on your back keeping body in tucked position.

FROM 3 YEARS

- Do not rock back on shoulders as it is too difficult to continue rocking action and it strains the neck.
- For a change: rock side to side.



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Wondering about ways to be more physically active with your children? Toronto Parks and Recreation offers many programs and resources. To find out about them call your local community centre or Access Toronto at 416-338-0338. You can also visit www.city.toronto.on.ca/parks.

If you are interested in more information on the development of healthy active children contact Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600, or visit our website at www.city.toronto.on.ca/health. Copies of this publication can be downloaded at this site.



www.city.toronto.on.ca/health

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