KIDS IN ACTION

Fitness for children

Birth to Age Five

Kellogg's®

Steps to a HealthierUS

To Parents and Caregivers

Daily physical activity is part of a child's foundation for a long, healthy life. Helping children adopt an active lifestyle early will have a tremendous impact on their physical, intellectual and emotional development.

To help you start your child or young children in your care on the path to a healthy, active lifestyle, the ***President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports***, the ***National Association for Sport and Physical Education***, and the ***Kellogg Company*** are pleased to bring you some simple ideas for physical activities that you can do with children to create the foundation for lifelong healthy behaviors. The booklet presents physical activities for children in three age groups: infants (birth to 18 months), toddlers (18 to 36 months), and preschoolers (3 to 5 years).

Getting involved in a child's physical activity routine early in life will demonstrate your caring and help foster an enjoyable, happy relationship with the child. As adults, we have a responsibility to be role models for our children — to share with them the pleasures and benefits of a physically active lifestyle as well as healthy eating habits.

We congratulate you on your desire to help the children in your life adopt healthy habits at an early age and wish you the best in your efforts to help young children learn and adopt health and fitness habits to last a lifetime.

Kellogg Company
www.kelloggs.com

National Association for Sport & Physical Education
www.aahperd.org/naspe

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
www.fitness.gov
www.presidentschallenge.org

How to use this booklet

For young children, physical activity is natural. ***Kids in Action*** is based on the premise that children love to move. Little ones are delighted to have your company and your undivided attention. Playing actively with them will give pleasure to both of you. You do not need to be an expert on movement to promote a child's daily physical activity, and no special equipment is necessary to make meaningful activity part of children's lives.

Being active from an early age will help children become physically fit later in life. Health-related fitness involves cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. This booklet incorporates these elements into activities for children in three age groups: infants (birth to 18 months), toddlers (18 to 36 months), and preschoolers (3 to 5 years).

Small children need several hours of unstructured movement every day. They should never be inactive for more than 60 minutes. Toddlers need at least 30 minutes of structured activities, such as those presented in this booklet, and preschoolers need at least 60 minutes of structured activities. You can break all activity periods into smaller units of ten or fifteen minutes.

To help your child reach individual activity goals, choose several of the activities in ***Kids in Action*** each day. Play at each one for 10 or 15 minutes. Ideally, you would have at least two or three activity sessions a day. When playing with your child, choose only activities for which he is developmentally ready. For example, don't play *Creepy/Crawly* until your baby is able to crawl and creep successfully. For activities that call for your infant to be seated before she can sit up unassisted, prop her up against a stable object such as the front of a sofa, or surround her with firm pillows. Most babies can sit assisted by 4 months of age and unassisted by age 9 months.

As you perform activities in ***Kids in Action*** with your child, remember that the most important thing you can do to promote an active lifestyle is to be a role model. So have fun, and let the suggestions here inspire your own creative movement ideas.

Remember, in addition to structured movements such as those shown here, young children should also participate in at least 60 minutes a day of *un*structured physical activity. The more the better! So be sure they have the time, space, and opportunity to crawl, walk, run, jump, climb and play actively!

A Few Basic Tips on Healthy Eating

Daily physical activity is only one part of the equation for optimal health and well-being for both you and your children. It must be coupled with healthful eating. This important food-fitness connection is what it's all about. By adopting an active lifestyle and choosing to eat healthful foods, you encourage children to follow your good example.

The first step toward helping your child eat a healthier diet is making a variety of nutritious foods readily available for snacks and at mealtime, including plenty of fruits and vegetables. Follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommended by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. Then your child can choose what he or she likes best.

Make family meals a priority beginning with the first meal of the day. Research shows that children who eat breakfast are better nourished than breakfast-skippers and are more likely to meet their daily need for certain essential vitamins and minerals. Eating breakfast improves alertness and helps children feel like getting up and moving. To help make breakfast a daily habit, keep an assortment of healthy foods available. Good choices include whole grain cereals, non-fat or low-fat milk, yogurt, and fruit.

Kick It! (Fig. 1)

Let your baby find out what her legs can do while she learns about cause and effect.

- Lay the baby on her back.
- Place a small pillow or a stuffed animal by the baby's feet.
- Encourage her to kick it!

Also:

- If the baby doesn't kick the object on her own, hold it just close enough to let her feel it with the bottom of her feet.
- Make sure she gets to kick with both right and left feet.
- Use language to encourage her and describe what she's doing. For example: "You're kicking the pillow!"

Fig. 1

Crossing the Midline (Fig. 2)

Have playtime activities that help your baby's right arm or leg cross over to the left and the left arm or leg cross over to the right. This crossing over is an important step in helping your baby learn.

- Place the baby in a comfortably seated position.
- Sit or kneel in front of him and hide a favorite toy behind your back.
- Make a game of handing him the toy so he has to reach *across* his body to get it.

Also:

- Repeat this, encouraging the use of both left and right hands, as long as the baby stays interested!

Fig. 2

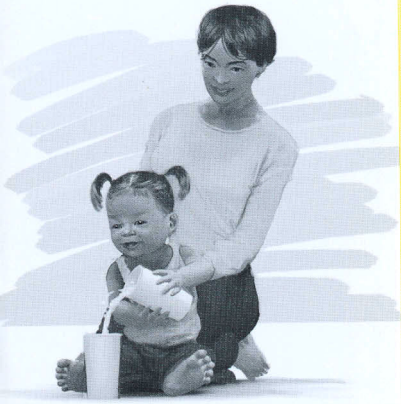

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Let It Pour (Fig. 3)

This outdoor summer activity promotes both eye-hand coordination and coordination in general.

- Place a plastic sheet or old tablecloth on the porch, patio or grass, and seat the baby on it, along with two large plastic cups – one empty and one filled with water or sand.
- Demonstrate pouring the water or sand from one cup to the other.
- Encourage the baby to try it!

Also:

- Later you can use two cups of different shapes that hold the same amount – for example, one 8-ounce cup that's short and squat and one 8-ounce cup that's tall and narrow.
- Fill one cup to the rim and demonstrate pouring the water or sand from one cup to the other.
- Encourage the baby to try it, too.

Creepy/Crawly (Fig. 4)

Crawling and creeping not only help your baby get around but also use the right and left sides of the body at the same time. This helps later with reading and writing skills.

- Lay the baby on her tummy on a carpet or smooth, clean surface.
- Place a favorite toy in front of her, just out of her reach.
- Encourage her to go get it.

Also:

- Let the baby reach and retrieve the toy, but then make a game out of moving it out of reach again.
- Repeat as long as the baby stays interested.

More Ideas for Infants:

- ***Splish-Splash****: Place a plastic sheet on the floor or outdoor area and some warm water in a large bowl, on top of the sheet. Sit the baby by the bowl. Demonstrate splashing lightly, and encourage the baby to try it.*
- ***I've Got Your Nose****: Playfully wiggle the infant's nose with your fingertips, exclaiming, "I've got your nose!" Continue with other body parts, like fingers, toes, knees, feet, hands, cheeks, and tummy, always excitedly naming each part.*
- ***"This Little Piggy"****: Playing traditional games like this one also helps create body awareness in infants.*
- ***Puppet Play****: Help your baby develop visual skills by lying him face up and then playfully moving a hand or finger puppet where he can see it – up and down, back and forth, and around in circles.*

Fig. 5

Heads, Bellies, Toes (Fig. 5)

This game helps with identifying body parts, flexibility, and understanding the concepts of up, down, low, and high.

- Stand facing your child.
- Beginning slowly, call out the names of the three body parts that are in the title, asking your child to touch each part as he hears its name.
- Once your child is successful at this, reverse – and mix up – the order of body parts.

Also:

- Change the tempo at which you call out the body parts – sometimes slow and sometimes fast.
- Another possibility is to start out slowly and gradually get faster.
- When your child is ready, play ***Heads, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes***. Later, you can once again change the order of body parts and the pace at which you call them out.

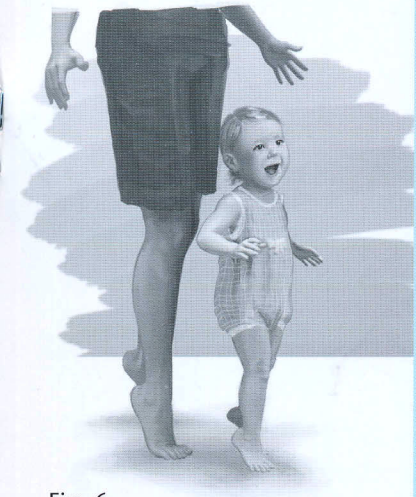

Fig. 6

Let's Tiptoe (Fig. 6)

Walking on tiptoe uses the child's own body weight to develop strength. It also helps with balance!

- Show your child how to tiptoe.
- Ask her to do it with you.
- Tiptoe as long as your toddler stays interested.

Also:

- Play a piece of quiet music as you both tiptoe.
- Use imagery – for example, asking your child to pretend she's sneaking up on someone, or a kitty cat trying to catch a bird.
- Vary pathways (straight, curving, and zigzagging) and directions (forward, backward, and sideward).

"Row, Row, Row Your Boat" (Fig. 7)

This game works on strength and flexibility, while also teaching about cause and effect.

- Sit facing your child with your legs apart and your child's legs straight out, between yours.
- Holding your child's hands, lean forward, and encourage him to lean back as far as he can.
- Pull him gently back up to a sitting position. Repeat.

Also:

- Sing ***"Row, Row, Row Your Boat"*** as you gently rock back and forth.
- As your child becomes stronger, you can also lean backward yourself, causing him to lean forward.

Let's Gallop (Fig. 8)

Show your child how to gallop. If you do this activity for long periods of time, it helps build up your child's heart health.

- Show your child galloping (leading with one foot while the other plays catch-up).
- Ask her to do it, too!
- Make a game of ***Follow the Leader*** out of it.

Fig. 6

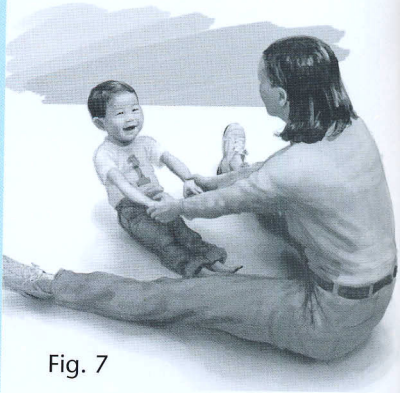

Fig. 7

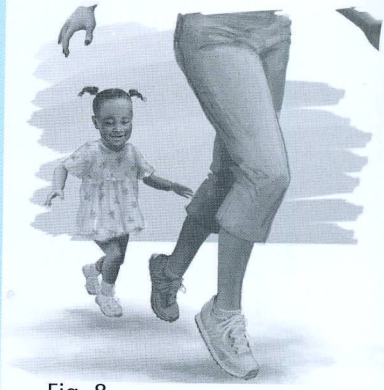

Fig. 8

Also:

- If your child isn't yet ready to gallop, have her pretend to be a horsie. She'll be galloping before you know it!
- Give your child a stick horse or a small, child-sized broom. This may make it more fun and help her learn to gallop.
- When your child knows how to gallop, have her try galloping with her other foot first.

More Ideas for Toddlers:

- ***Follow the Leader****: Play this fun game using all of the traveling skills your child has learned (walking, running, tiptoeing, jumping, etc.). Stop once in a while to do a stationary (in place) skill, like stretching, bending, or twisting.*
- ***Tiny Steps/Giant Steps****: Move around the room with your toddler, sometimes taking tiny steps and sometimes giant steps. You can also ask her to try it on her own, giving her a signal (like two hand claps) that means it's time to switch from one kind of step to the other.*
- ***"Pop Goes the Weasel"****: Hum or sing this age-old favorite, asking your child to move around the room in any way he wants until the "pop," when he should jump into the air. Later, you can ask him to jump and change directions when he hears the pop.*
- ***Rabbits and 'Roos****: Invite your toddler to jump as though she were a rabbit. Then ask her to show you how a kangaroo would look jumping. Alternate between the two.*

Preschoolers

Heel Raises (Fig. 9)

Lifting and lowering the heels is a strength-training exercise even the youngest children can do. It also helps with balance.

- Stand facing your child.
- Hold hands.
- Slowly lift and lower your heels, encouraging your child to do the same thing at the same time.

Also:

- Pause each time you rise onto tiptoe, counting aloud to five.
- Instead of just raising your heels, you and your child can jump (two feet) or hop (one foot) lightly in place.
- Try all of these activities both slowly and quickly.

Fig. 9

Beanbag Balance (Fig. 10)

When it comes to balancing activities, this is an all-time favorite for children.

- Place a beanbag or a small, soft toy on your child's head.
- Invite her to walk from one point in the room to another without dropping the beanbag.
- If she has to, she can hold on to it at first.

Also:

- Ask her to balance the beanbag as she walks both slowly and quickly, in different directions (forward, backward, or sideward), and in different pathways (straight, curving, and zigzagging).

Fig. 10

- Invite her to try balancing the beanbag on other body parts, like a hand, shoulder, or elbow.

Jump the River (Fig. 11)

Jumping uses the child's own weight to build strength. If you do this for long periods of time, it can be good for the heart.

- Lay a jump rope in a straight line on the floor – or draw a line on the ground with chalk.
- Ask your child to pretend the line is a river.
- Challenge him to jump from one side of the river to the other.

Also:

- Be sure your child is landing with knees bent and heels coming all the way down to the floor.
- When he's ready, you can "widen the river" by using two ropes, side by side, or a towel.

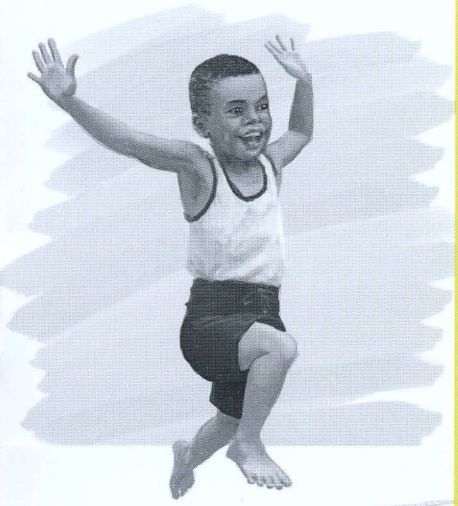

Fig. 11

Mirror Game (Fig. 12)

This cooperative game is great for social/emotional development. And it means children have to do with their bodies what their eyes are seeing. This will help later with writing, among other things.

- Talk to your child about looking in the mirror.
- Stand facing your child, explaining that you want her to do exactly as you do – just like she were your reflection in the mirror.
- Begin making slow movements that you can do in place, like raising and lowering an arm, nodding your head, or clapping hands. Take turns being leader.

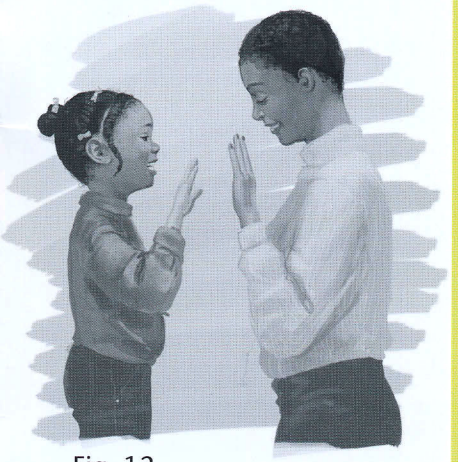

Fig. 12

Also:

- To help your child be more flexible, do things like bending and straightening at the waist, stretching arms overhead, or slowly reaching for your toes (keeping knees slightly bent).
- To help with muscle strength, lift and lower the heels or do deep knee bends.
- To help with heart health, jog or jump in place, stopping occasionally to rest.

Fig. 12

More Ideas for Preschoolers:

- ***Bridges & Tunnels****: Forming different kinds of bridges and tunnels with the body or body parts can help with both flexibility and muscle strength.*
- ***The Track Meet****: Invite your child to pretend she's in a track meet at the Olympics. Can she pretend to jump hurdles, in addition to "running the track?"*
- ***"Simon Says"*** *: Play this excellent body-parts identification game without any elimination! To include fitness factors, have "Simon" issue challenges to jog or tiptoe in place, bend and stretch, or bend and straighten knees.*
- ***Statues****: To get your child moving, put on a piece of up-tempo music and invite him to move while the music is playing and to freeze into a statue when you pause it.*

Physical Activity, Fitness and Health Resources

Web Sites

- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans: www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines
- Eat Smart. Play Hard: www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/home2.html
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada: www.heartandstroke.ca
- Healthfinder: www.healthfinder.gov
- HealthierUS and Steps to a HealthierUS: www.healthierus.gov www.healthierus.gov/steps
- Healthy People 2010: www.healthypeople.gov
- Moving & Learning: www.movingandlearning.com
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education: www.aahperd.org/naspe
- President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: www.fitness.gov www.presidentschallenge.org

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Publications

- *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Raise a Child Who Is Physically Fit* by Joanne Landy & Keith Burridge. New York NY: Macmillan, 1997.
- *Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years* by National Association for Sport and Physical Education. ISBN 0-88314-741-6, #304-10254, 2002.
- *Creative Resources for Infants and Toddlers* by Judy Herr & Terri Swim. Clifton Park NY: Delmar Learning, 1999.
- *Fit Kids: The Complete Shape-Up Program from Birth through High School* by Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D. Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999.
- *Fundamental Motor Skills & Movement Activities for Young Children* by Joanne M. Landy & Keith R. Burridge. West Nyack NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1999.
- *Games to Play with Babies, 3rd ed.,* by Jackie Silberg. Beltsville MD: Gryphon House, 2001.
- *Movement Activities for Early Childhood* by Carol Totsky Hammett. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics, 1992.
- *Moving & Learning Series: Preschoolers & Kindergartners* by Rae Pica, with original music by Richard Gardzina. Clifton Park NY: Delmar Learning, 2000.
- *Moving & Learning Series: Toddlers* by Rae Pica, with original music by Richard Gardzina. Clifton Park NY: Delmar Learning, 2000.
- *Your Active Child: How to Boost Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive Development through Age-Appropriate Activity* by Rae Pica. New York: Contemporary Books, 2003.
- *Your Child at Play: Birth to One Year, 2nd ed.,* by Marilyn Segal, Ph.D. New York: Newmarket Press, 1988.
- *Your Child's Fitness: Practical Advice for Parents* by Susan Kalish. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics, 1996.

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