Physical Development

Movement for Learning







We're not messing around, we're making connections and strengthening muscles!



'Physical development sits at the heart of well-being, learning and development – and it creates school readiness.' (White 2015)

The Importance of Moving

Current research is showing that the physical development in many children entering school is declining. This can impact hugely on their development in so many areas for example; Reading, Writing and Listening &Attention.

Children need to move. They are programmed to be active and explore as much as possible.

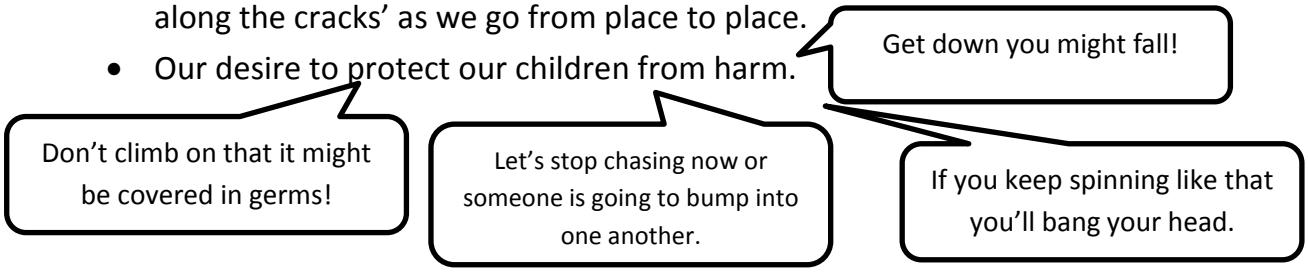
'Jumping around strengthens bones, without this the bones weaken. The same can be said with all muscle groups.

Vision doesn't develop fully without moving in a fully 3d environment. Eg spinning, running, hanging upside down. **The tracking of eyes needed for reading** comes from running and focussing and running and focussing. ' Jan White

The first 7 years are the most important time to develop balance and vision development**.**

Why are we seeing a decline?

- Busy lives often mean that toddlers and pre-schoolers spend a lot of time in pushchairs and cars as we move from one activity or errand to another.
- Less time for walking, skipping, scooting, balancing on walls and 'walking along the cracks' as we go from place to place.
- Our desire to protect our children from harm.



- The introduction of tablets and smart phones has captured our and our children's attention.
- With busier schedules parents and carers often dress and undress children putting on and fastening their coats and shoes. Try to allow time for them to help, have a go and gradually do this for themselves.

All children-especially those below the age of 7- Have strong impulses to engage with different movements that their body and brains are seeking to strengthen and develop. Try to teach yourself differently. Try not to see what could go wrong but what that physical activity or impulse is giving to the child. Can we be more positive about their wants and impulses? Can we facilitate that need and impulse in a safe way? Can we allow more time to get from place to place to allow for that impulse to walk along the wall or jump across the puddles?

The UK Chief Medical Officers Guidelines 2011



Only one in ten children aged 2-4 are active for three hours or more daily.

Children under 5 (capable of walking)

- Should be physically active daily for at least 180 mins/ 3 hours, spread throughout the day.
- Should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

5- 18 Year Olds

- Should engage in moderate/vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 mins every day.
- Vigorous intensity activities, including those that strengthen muscle and bone should be incorporated 3 times a week.
- Should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary.

Ideas for helping at home.

- Mountain Rescue – Place toys, animals at the top of the stairs. Can you rescue the animals? Use a basket, bag or box to carry them down. Link to counting. Making up stories.
- Soft Catch – Play throwing and catching with a teddy. Link to counting.
- One-legged Song- Sing a nursery rhyme- how far can you get through the song while standing on one leg. If you practise can you do it for longer?
- Washing the dishes using sponges and washing brushes.
- Spin around and around and around (in a big open space).
- Walk along and jump off low walls.
- Encourage climbing.
- Spend lots of time at the park. Swing, balance, hang upside down
- Play tig.
- Balancing lines / jumping circles – draw lines with chalk to balance along. How long can you make your lines? How far can you balance? Different size circles to jump in.
- Digging for worms – Using a trowel and mini garden fork to try and find worms in the soil.
- Move a puddle – Use a turkey baster to empty a puddle into a bucket.
- Play follow my leader or Simon says exploring different ways of moving.
- Balloon play – Push, pat , throw and catching balloons focus on one task at a time. Move the balloon from one side to the other.
- Sorting small objects into egg cartons eg, buttons, pompoms, acorns etc
- Scooping and pouring water, sand, rice, seeds.
- Snipping with scissors. Pegging out washing. Playdough, bead threading and jigsaws.

Additional Information and Research

- Children are getting more injured as a result of less risky play. Children are born curious and a desire to do and undo.
- More four year olds than ever before need physio due to poor upper body strength.
- Children who take risks have better immune systems, stronger muscles, better mental health, cope better with stress.

Give the children choices and freedom and power. We only get one childhood and when it's gone it's gone.

Maggie Dent

- 92% of four year olds are not getting enough physical play.

Sue Palmer

For further information:

'Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from our four home countries' Chief Medical Officers (2011)

Have fun together exploring and learning new skills ☺



