

## Be active every day!

Active play experiences that are led by children allow them to discover what their body can do, be creative, and enjoy being active without adults leading them. Having simple play items available allows your child to build and explore movement skills in a variety of ways. For example, throwing does not always have to occur with a ball – throwing skills can be explored by using large beach balls, beanbags and pom poms. Collect a range of play items of different sizes, colours and textures for your child to build, hit, shake, throw, kick or dance with. This makes being active more fun, without spending a lot of money.

Ideas for active play experiences that can take place in either indoor or outdoor play spaces:

- Digging through a pile of leaves.
- Playing dress ups or dancing to music.
- Building with pots and pans, pieces of wood or old boxes.
- Jumping or running around an obstacle course.
- Creating a rocket ship out of a cardboard box.
- Leaping in and out of hoops.

**For healthy development in infants (birth to 1 year), physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments – should be encouraged from birth.**



## The importance of active play





**It is your child's job to be active every day! The learning and growth gained from being active is important for developing important physical, social, language, emotional and intellectual skills. It can also directly impact your child's ability to deal with the situations and challenges they will meet later in life.**

**During early childhood, physical activity can involve unplanned 'free' play, walking or pedalling to and from a destination, or even helping around the house and garden.**

## Active play for your child

Children learn best when their whole bodies and minds are stimulated, and being active does just that. Free movement and active play is the most suitable form of physical activity for babies, infants and pre-schoolers. Active play gives children the freedom to move at their own pace, and in their natural 'stop-start' pattern.

Every child, regardless of their ability, can be encouraged to:

- move their body in a range of ways and directions
- use their imagination
- have fun playing alone or with others
- feel good about what they can do.

Getting the most out of active play also involves allowing your child to set the pace with new challenges, and enjoying a variety of experiences. The pace of activity can range from light actions (such as building or playing on the floor) through to vigorous actions (such as running or jumping).

Sometimes you will need to join in with children's play, while at other times you can just enjoy watching your child practise new skills. Watching your child's active play can increase the fun for both of you – you can learn what your child enjoys doing, and your child can show off what they can do. You can offer praise, as well as simple feedback that further challenges or improves their skills – for example, prompting your child to 'throw with the other arm' or 'run backwards rather than forwards'.

## Playing outdoors

Outdoor play offers more chances to move, explore and discover different environments. Finding objects outside that are thin, thick, light, heavy, smooth or different from each other can be a fun way for children to learn through using the environment. Similarly, moving around on the grass or sand, or simply feeling the breeze, is an opportunity to make the most of outdoor play. The outdoors is full of noises, sights and adventures just waiting to be explored.

Physical activity should be a **daily priority** in every family, and for children of all levels of ability. Work with your early childhood setting to ensure that your child has a variety of opportunities to move actively and play freely for at least three hours every day.

