

## TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

# Happy Healthy Kids



**Happy Healthy Kids** focuses on the benefits of exercise for pre-schoolers and on the importance of developing gross and fine motor skills.

The preschool child needs lots of opportunities to practice movement. That is how they learn and grow. The theme also looks at the benefits of healthy eating and reducing screen time at home.



**Active children are healthy, happy, sleep better and are ready for school.**

### Physical Activity

*Children between the ages of 3—5 need to be active for 3 hours everyday.*

Think about activities such as swimming, running, climbing & dancing, but also gentler everyday activities such as walking, scooting, riding a bike, going to the park and jumping in puddles.

### Gross Motor Skills

*Physical skills which require whole body movement such as standing, walking, running and jumping.*

Crucial for everyday activities such as getting dressed, getting in /out of bed.

Important for school as poor upper-body support will affect the ability to sit at a desk and engage in activities.

### Fine Motor Skills

*Finger and hand skills such as writing, cutting, twisting, squeezing, building, fastening and weaving.*

Rely on the development of physical skills such as core and shoulder strength to provide a stable base from which the arm and hand can move with control (using a fork, brushing teeth, getting dressed, writing).

### Healthy Eating Tips

*Be a role model for healthy eating.*

Set meal and snack times and discourage eating between these. Give enough time to eat. Cook the same meal for everyone. Use smaller plates, bowls and cutlery. Continue to offer foods even if they did not like them the first time.

**Don't give up!** 😊



### Indoor Play

*Time spent playing actively indoors with toys that require movement count towards the goal of 3 hours activity.*

Or, get your child involved in household chores— a learning experience that will keep them active!

### Messy play

*Messy play counts towards 3 hours of physical activity and is a great option when you can't get outside.*

Water play—adding colours/bubbles, lots of utensils and bottles for variety.

Play dough—find out how to [make your own](#) here!

### Less Screen Time

*A pre-school child should be limited to 2 hours or less screen time.*

Screen time includes television, computer, tablets and phones.

Screens should be left **out of bedrooms** at night .



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Children under 5 need **180 minutes** of physical activity every day.

Luckily, the preschool child is naturally active and wants to clamber over furniture, climb trees and jump off chairs. Given space and freedom, children will gain many of the physical skills they need on their own. **Active children are healthy, happy, sleep better and are ready for school.**

**Safety proof your home and get comfortable with a certain level of mess and noise!**

### TIP 1: Be Active

*Try to reduce the time that your child is inactive or still.*

- Put toys on the floor, when playing on their hands & knees they are putting their weight on their hands and hips, developing their **core muscles**
- Play games that develop **stability** such as start and stop games where children put their weight on different parts of their body.
- Play **balance games** and Simon Says to increase your child's body awareness

### TIP 2: Using 'Big Muscles'

When children play freely they naturally develop many **gross motor skills** e.g. running, crawling, lifting, climbing etc. Giving them plenty of **opportunities** throughout the day will help develop these skills —just 5 -10 mins each day will help

Encourage your child by providing lots of **praise and encouragement.**

When introducing a new **exercise or game repeat** it for several days or even weeks to support the skill.

### TIP 3: Using 'Little Muscles'

Children need to develop their **fine motor co-ordination** to perform basic everyday tasks, like dressing and eating.

Fine motor skills can be developed through everyday activities using items found around the home. Make sure your child is having **adequate playtime** with **small toys** such as cars, people, animals and blocks. Try to include simple art activities or playing with play-dough.

### TIP 4: Involve Them!

Allow your child to **help with shopping, baking or making meals**—include stirring, mixing and pouring ingredients.

Let them **set the table** for dinner, and teach them how to pour their own drinks to encourage independence and make them **feel included.**

This can also help encourage **healthy eating habits** as they will be curious about the food they have helped you create!

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When children play freely they naturally develop many gross motor skills e.g. running, crawling, lifting, climbing etc.

There are lots of activities you can do to develop these skills, some are suggested below. You can even use the items from your **home-learning packs** to play!



*Why not tick off the ones you have tried for yourself?*

- ☺ Put toys on the floor (when playing on the floor as they are putting weight on their hands & hips)
- ☺ Play games that **develop stability** such as 'start & stop' games e.g. Musical Statues, Animal walks—jump, bunny hop, crab walk.- where children put their weight on different parts of their body.
- ☺ Play balance games and Simon Says to increase your **child's body awareness**; play the mirror game—face the mirror and take turns copying movements in the mirror—waving, touching your head etc.
- ☺ Pillow fights holding pillow with 2 hands encourages **movement across the body**
- ☺ **Encourage Bilateral Integration** by exercises which go across body—touch left knee with right hand, stand up straight, touch right knee with left hand, stand up straight, repeat 5 times. Add Jumping Jacks
- ☺ Throwing and catching games develop **hand-eye coordination**—play with balloons, bean bags or balls
- ☺ Make **skittles** out of plastic bottles
- ☺ Making your **own obstacle course** use beanbags or any household items)
- ☺ Walk up and down stairs with alternating feet, without support
- ☺ Ride a tricycle, bike or scooter
- ☺ Go to the park and teach them to **climb** or use the slide on their own
- ☺ Art activities like **drawing, tearing** or **cutting** paper, or make collages
- ☺ Finger painting, painting with brushes, natural materials and add foam/bubbles to paint
- ☺ **Play dough** strengthens finger, develops motor control and encourages creativity. Use **shape-cutters** and other utensils, or include other toys for imagination games
- ☺ Thread empty toilet rolls or pasta shaped on to string (penne or macaroni works best!) to **make a necklace**
- ☺ Using **tweezers** to pick up and sort items
- ☺ **Construction games** with blocks or get a basket and fill it with toilet rolls, boxes and paper and watch your child create and **problem solve**

### **Change4Life**

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

*is also packed with  
food facts, recipes and  
games to keep your  
child active*