

Q&A HOW IS PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT CRUCIAL TO A CHILD'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT?



FOR PARENTS

Q Why is it important for my baby to have tummy time, and how can I support his physical development?

Babies need tummy time, which means spending time in a prone, or belly-down, position when awake.

Tummy time allows infants to bear weight with their arms, and this helps to develop their neck, back and shoulder muscles. By their third to fourth month, babies should be able to lift and move their heads side to side while in a prone position. This develops their motor abilities to acquire skills like rolling and sitting.

All tummy time should be supervised. You can start when a baby is home from the hospital. In early infancy, parents can begin with short periods (one to three minutes) of tummy time, two to three times a day. Tummy time should be done before feeding to avoid vomiting. Some babies may not be comfortable with tummy time. You can lay your child on your chest while you engage him. Over time, your baby will come to enjoy tummy time. Observe your baby and stop the activity if he is uncomfortable or fusses.

How to practise tummy time:

- > **Start with kangaroo care.** Skin-to-skin contact promotes bonding and helps regulate babies' temperature, heart rate and breathing.
- > **Gently assist with rolling.** Encourage babies to enjoy the motion of rolling and weight-bearing with their arms.
- > **Speak gently or use toy rattles.** This encourages babies to raise their heads and even sustain their head lifts while attending to the different sounds.

Q What are some ways to integrate physical development into the other developmental and learning areas?

Physical activity needs to be part of children's daily routine. Children are naturally active and movement allows them to release energy while practicing existing or learning new skills. Provide them with ample opportunities for physical development throughout the day during their daily activities. Remember to make it fun!

Here are some ways to integrate physical activities into other learning areas:

> Add movement to music or during transitions

March to music with a strong beat. Create dance steps with music from different cultures. Encourage children to jump, hop, or crawl to a melody. When transitioning from one activity to another, children can tiptoe, walk on heels, use big steps, stomp, etc.

> Dramatise a story

Encourage children to act out the characters. They can imitate the movements of the story's characters and dramatise a scene from the story.

> Play hands-on numeracy games

Plan physical games to allow children to learn numeracy skills such as sorting, patterning, counting etc. For example, children can count the number of bean bags they toss into boxes or a laundry basket.

> Develop fine motor skills through art

Provide different sized pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, scissors, or papers for children to tear or scrunch to create art while they strengthen their fine motor skills.



FOR EDUCATORS



MOK HUI WEN is a senior physiotherapist at the National University Hospital Rehabilitation Centre. She works with children and adolescents with medical, developmental and physical conditions. She believes that children learn best when having fun and being actively involved in meaningful activities that aid motor skills acquisition.



SYLVIA YEO is a Cluster Quality Manager at My First Skool with more than 17 years of experience in the early childhood sector. She is also an ECDA Fellow who mentors early childhood professionals and develop sector-wide resources. She believes that physical play is important for children's growth and development.