

Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Move and play Birth - 9 months



Your baby needs to learn about the world around them and how to move within it. They should develop skills to hold their own head up, roll around the floor and sit up during this period.

Your child needs your help to explore, move and find out how their body works.

The following ideas will help you and your baby to enjoy play. They will also help your child to strengthen their muscles and learn to move on their own.

- Make sure you place your baby in a variety of positions to practice movements.
- Try sitting your baby on your knee facing you so you can help them to support their head. Talk or sing to your baby, make faces or sounds to keep their interest. Encourage them to look at and play with their hands and feet.
- Tummy time is very important. It may take a while for your baby to get used to this position, but it is great for strengthening neck, back and arm muscles in preparation for learning to sit and crawl. Place a small rolled up blanket or towel under their chest to raise them up off the floor whilst on their tummy to play.
- Play peek-a-boo. Look in the mirror, make faces, clap your hands, sing songs and nursery rhymes whilst playing with your child on the floor in different positions, e.g. on their side.
- When their head is stronger help them to sit, supporting them with cushions.

- Some children will need to be encouraged to take toys and food to their mouth. Messy play with food and textured toys can help this, with you watching closely.
- Children need to learn how to move from one position to another e.g. lying to sitting, sitting to standing. Encourage them to want to move towards the toys that are placed in different positions around them, assisting them to roll, kneel and sit should they need a little help.
- Children need to be encouraged to explore their surroundings. To help children learn to move and balance, first place toys just out of reach then encourage them to stretch or move to get the toys.
- We do not recommend the use of baby walkers. They do not help children to walk properly and are unsafe. Instead, encourage them to use push along toys
- Find objects that are interesting to play with and attract attention e.g. noisy toys, bright colours, flashing lights and bubbles. Encourage your baby to reach for these or follow them with their eyes.



- M** Motivate your baby to move and explore their surroundings.
- O** Opportunity to spend time on the floor, especially on their tummy playing games, helps your baby's muscles to get strong.
- V** Vary the toys you play with to hold your little one's attention.
- E** Encourage your baby to do as much as they can independently, placing toys just out of their reach.

P Play should be fun for both you and your baby.

L Look at things your baby enjoys playing with and use these to motivate them to move.

A Attention, what does your baby take notice of; noisy toys that light up, rattles, reflections in a mirror? Use these toys to keep your baby's attention during tummy time.

Y Your time with your baby is important to provide opportunities for them to learn through play.

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Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Bridge Park Plaza

Bridge Park Road

Thurmaston

Leicester

LE4 8PQ

Occupational Therapy: 0116 295 2495

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Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Move and play 9 - 18 months



Your child should develop more independence in their movements and become less dependent upon you for help to move around in their surroundings.

They need the opportunity to explore a safe but challenging environment to help them improve their movement skills, even though they may become frustrated when it is difficult to do so. They need an adult to keep an eye on them to make sure they are safe and give them encouragement and reassurance.

These games and activity ideas will help your child to develop more adventurous and co-ordinated physical skills.

- It is important that your child is given the opportunity to play on the floor and explore their surroundings.
- Sit on the floor and sing songs/ play clapping games with your child. Practice building towers with cubes, playing with crayons and reading books. Make time for these activities every day.
- Playing with large shape sorters, insert puzzles and threading large beads can help your child to use their hands in a different way and start to understand how shapes, colours and patterns fit together.
- Encourage your child to enjoy 'messy play' with sand, water, paint and play dough. Food play is also a good way to develop feeding and social skills.
- Encourage your child to get up off the floor by placing toys at a higher level. Your child will then pull up to stand at the furniture to reach them and practice moving around the room by holding on and moving across gaps in the furniture.

- We do not recommend the use of baby walkers as they do not help children walk properly and are dangerous. Instead encourage them to use push along toys.
- Give your child lots of praise for attempting new activities/ more adventurous movements, even when their efforts are not a complete success.
- Take time to play outside in the garden or at the park with your child. They will have more space and freedom to move around and have new experiences such as grass, uneven surfaces and steps. Let them explore and do as much as they can do safely themselves.
- Playgrounds are good for encouraging more adventurous movements such as swinging and climbing, crawling through tunnels and crawling over, under and around obstacles. This helps them to orientate themselves and position in space.
- Soft play areas and ball pools are great, safe areas for children to move and explore, to take risks and develop their self confidence.
- It is important that children of this age mix with similar aged children e.g. mother and toddler groups. As they play alongside each other they learn from each other and copy one another.

M Movement between positions and around the room should be encouraged as much as possible to allow independent exploration of the surroundings.

O Opportunities to play on the floor are important for both child and adult.

V Visits to the playground and baby/ toddler groups to play with other children and use the play equipment are fun.

E Encourage your child to stand to play and hold onto furniture to move around the room. Use a push-a-long walker.

P Practice building towers of cubes and looking at books together.

L Let your child play and explore as freely as is safe to do so e.g. scribbling with crayons and picking up small objects.

A At mealtimes, encourage your child to participate as much as possible e.g. eating finger foods and holding own spoon.

Y You can enjoy 'messy play' together and have great fun with water, sand and paint.

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Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Move and play 18 months - 2 years



By this age your child is becoming more adventurous both with how they move and how they act around people.

It is important to give them the opportunity to play in a variety of surroundings and groups of people. This will help them to learn more skills in different areas.

Let them try new things with your supervision. This will help them build upon the movement skills they already have and develop their self confidence.

The following games and activity ideas will help your child to further develop their confidence, strength and movement abilities in a fun way.

- Encourage children to get down onto the floor or sit at a table with you to play. Arts and craft and construction activities will help your child to develop different ways to use their hands.
- Encourage your child to enjoy 'messy play' with sand, water, paint and play dough by making patterns and pictures in these. This will help early writing skills.
- Play ball games such as rolling, throwing and kicking to help develop their strength, balance and coordination.
- Give your child lots of praise for attempting new activities/ more adventurous movements, even when their efforts are not a complete success.
- Take time to play outside in the garden or at the park with your child. Let them explore and do as much as they can safely by themselves. This helps them to build confidence and strength and learn what they can do with their own bodies.

- Playgrounds are good for encouraging more adventurous movements such as swinging, climbing, jumping and spinning.
- Soft play areas and ball pools are great for children to safely explore different ways of moving and taking risks, as well as help improve their balance and coordination skills.
- Encourage use of ride-on toys and tricycles to help develop the strength of their legs and help them learn to pedal later on.
- Kicking balls helps to develop balance on one leg.
- Practise singing action songs as this will help your child learn about their bodies.
- Pretend play such as dressing up will help them to learn to dress themselves and feeding dolls will help develop imagination and social skills.
- Take time out to sit and read with your child. This will help their visual and imagination skills.
- It is important that children of this age have the opportunity to mix with similar ages children (e.g. mother and baby/toddler groups) as they play alongside each other and copy one another, learning from each other as they do so.

- M** Make time and opportunity for play in a safe environment.
- O** Opportunity to play with other children allows copying/ learning of activities/ movements.
- V** Visit the playground to allow your child time and space to explore more adventurous movements including ball games.
- E** Encourage use of ride-on toys and tricycles. They are good fun.

P Paints and crayons will help your child learn how to use their hands and to develop their pencil skills. Play dough will help to strengthen their hands.

L Learning about their body can take place by playing with dolls and teddies and singing songs and rhymes to name body parts.

A Acting games and pretend play should be encouraged to help your child learn about their everyday surroundings and how to behave in an acceptable way.

Y You do not need expensive toys or play equipment. Big cardboard boxes are great fun to climb in and out of and to make dens with, encouraging use of their imagination.

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Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Move and play 2 - 3 years



By now your child should be very busy exploring the world around them. They will probably be keeping you very busy too!

Your child will learn new things by moving, climbing and copying the everyday things they see you doing.

Here are some games you can play with your child to help them become a skilled mover.

- Play ball games with your child such as rolling, throwing, catching and kicking. Practice of these will develop hand-eye co-ordination and balance and help strengthen their muscles.
- Take time to play outside in the fresh air. Blow bubbles for your child to run after and pop. Flying kites can be great fun too.
- Visits to the playground are enjoyable. Play equipment is good for developing more adventurous movement abilities such as climbing, spinning, swinging and sliding.
- Encourage your child to walk more e.g. holding your hand or pushing the buggy as you walk to the local park or shops.
- Encourage the use of ride-on toys and tricycles. By moving on these, the child will be strengthening up their leg muscles.
- Encourage your child to go up and down stairs as independently as possible, although on some occasions help may be required.

- Enjoy 'messy play' such as paint, glue and play dough so that your child can experience different textures and sensations.
- Scribbling and drawing with crayons, chalk and painting pictures is fun and will help to prepare them for using pencils later on.
- Although your child may now be more content to play independently, take time to get down on the floor to play together with your child. Use jigsaws and puzzles to learn about shapes and colours.
- It is important that children of this age have opportunity to mix with similar aged children, as they play alongside each other and copy one another, learning as they do so. Also encourage your child to be comfortable with being left with other adults e.g. staying with friends or at playgroup/nursery.



M Moving in different ways using ride-on and push-along toys and tricycles is fun.

O Obstacle courses are challenging and allow exploration by moving over and under, in and out, along and through play equipment, such as tunnels, e.g. cardboard boxes to crawl through, piles of cushions to climb over and lines on the carpet to walk along.

V Visits to the playground or park can be fun and allow more space for running about and using the play equipment.

E Encourage ball games, including rolling, kicking, throwing, catching and bouncing.

P Playgroups will have many different toys and equipment for your child to try.

L Lots of time to try new activities and practice new skills.

A Activities involving pens, crayons and paint will help your child learn about using their hands.

Y You do not need expensive toys or play equipment. Play opportunities are all around you at home or in the street and on the way to the shops.

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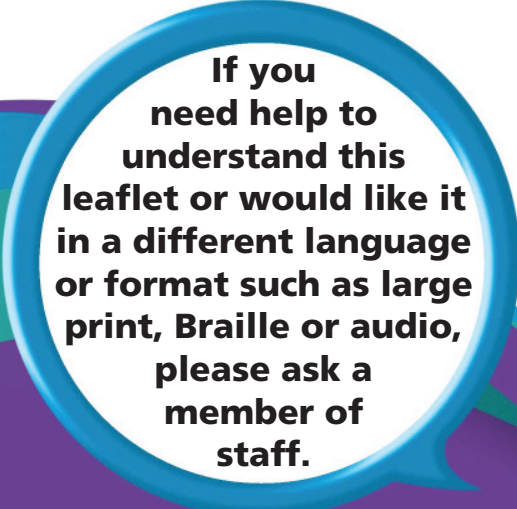
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Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Move and play 3 - 4 years



Your child will be really interested in knowing about what's around them and wanting to find out more. You will notice an increase in their confidence and in what they are able to do.

They will have firm ideas of things they do and don't like doing. These ideas should be encouraged and will allow your child to start thinking and speaking for themselves.

They will be more independent and generally need supervision just to ensure safety.

Here are some activity ideas to develop movement skills.

- Ball games are fun. Practice throwing and catching and kicking a ball into a target.
- Encourage your child to enjoy 'messy play' with sand, water, paint and play dough.
- Give your child lots of praise for attempting new activities/ more adventurous movements, even when their efforts are not a complete success.
- Playgrounds are good for encouraging more adventurous movements such as swinging, climbing, jumping, spinning and sliding.
- Soft play areas and ball pools are good safe areas for children to find out what they are physically able to do. As they are able to do more, they will be able to have a go at the more difficult activities and experience new sensations.
- Friends are important. By playing together and sharing experiences, they learn about what they can and can't do.

- Riding on scooters and bicycles is a good way of developing balance.
- Arts and crafts are fun and using scissors is a skill, which needs practicing at this age.
- It is important for you and your child to spend time on quiet activities such as jigsaws, card games, lotto and dominoes as these help them to learn about colours, numbers and shapes.
- Construction bricks, threading beads and cotton reels can be fun to play with and help develop eye-hand co-ordination skills.
- Help your child to name and recognise shapes, letters and numbers. Try to get them to copy them.
- Dressing up games will help your child to learn about their body and help to improve their ability to dress themselves.



M Make games of throwing, catching and kicking a ball.

O Outdoor play on tricycles, ride-on, push along toys and scooters is good fun.

V Variety of games to improve balance and movement; jumping, hopping and standing on one leg.

E Encourage your child to go up and down stairs as independently as possible, although on some occasions help may be required.

P Playing with friends and family is fun.

L Letting children use scissors with your help is important now.

A Activities like dominoes, card games and jigsaws help children understand shapes, numbers and colours.

Y You can help with learning to write by helping your child copy shapes and patterns.

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