

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.



A blank sheet of lined paper with 25 horizontal lines, suitable for writing or drawing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.

If you have any concerns or would like further information about your child's development, please contact your public health nurse (health visitor) or:

**Children's Occupational Therapy Service**

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