

4. Tips on sleep for young children

Apart from ensuring adequate sleep time, it is also crucial to set up a stimulation-free and comfortable sleeping environment. Parents can take reference from the following tips:

- Keep young children's sleeping area quiet, dim and comfortable.
- Before bedtime, turn off the computer and keep other electronic screen products out of reach.
- Help young children establish a soothing pre-sleep routine with a period of relaxing activities an hour or so before bed, e.g. taking a bath and reading a book. Avoid stressful and stimulating activities such as playing video games and having vigorous exercises.



Part 4 Online version



Part 4

Tipson Physical Activity

- I. Motor development and unique characteristics of young children
- II. Parent-child physical games
- III. Safety measures
- IV. Home-school co-operation

I. Motor development and unique characteristics of young children

1. Motor development of young children

The period of ages 2 to 6 is a fundamental stage for motor development of young children. During this period, they acquire motor skills like walking, stair climbing, running, jumping, climbing, throwing, batting and manipulating items. Through appropriate teaching, practices in daily life and physical games, children progress from being clumsy to proficient in these fundamental motor skills, which can subsequently be formed into more complex movements and sports techniques for daily activities and formal sports.

However, as young children grow older, it does not necessarily mean an improvement in the level of motor skills. The only way to become proficient in motor skills is through continuous learning, practice and application. On the contrary, movements remain clumsy and inefficient without sufficient practice. Take adults as an example, they are proficient in walking because they walk every day. This is the consequence of long-term practice. However, not every person is good at catching a basketball while running or striking back a tennis ball with a racquet. The failure to master these skills is not due to a lack of potential, but a lack of learning opportunities and practice.

Young children are good learners. In order to fully develop their potential, parents have to provide them with ample opportunities to learn, practise and master various motor skills that are beneficial for their lifetime. Parents can take reference from the following activities:

Table 3 Recommended activities for enhancing the development of children's movement skills

Level 1	Level 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running • Jumping on the spot on two legs • Jumping up on the dominant leg • Standing on the dominant leg for a short duration • Throwing and catching a small ball/bean bag • Kicking a static ball • Dribbling with two hands • Propelling a tricycle by pushing off the ground with both feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dodging obstacles while running • Jumping down and forward on two legs • Jumping forward on left or right leg • Standing on left or right leg • Throwing and catching a small ball/bean bag while moving • Kicking or stopping a rolling ball • Dribbling with two hands or the dominant hand continuously • Pedalling a tricycle or a bicycle with training wheel(s)



Smart tips

Children with good motor skills are more likely to engage in physical activity after growing up. Compared with their less skilful counterparts, they are more physically ready to master different sport skills and enjoy the experience.

2. Unique characteristics of young children

Young children have less endurance and shorter attention span when compared with adults, so interesting physical activities with game elements should be chosen to arouse children’s interest. When leading a physical activity, parents should take into consideration their children’s unique characteristics in order to address their needs and add more fun to the activity.

- **Intermittent and vigorous activity pattern**

When engaging in a physical activity, young children usually do not know how to adjust the level of intensity. They tend to move quickly and vigorously in an intermittent manner. As the **recommended amount of physical activity is accumulated throughout the whole course of a day**, it is not necessary for parents to have children engaged in 180 minutes of physical activity at one go. This will only make them feel exhausted and lose interest in physical activity. Instead, **it is more advisable to have more frequent but shorter sessions, so as to provide ample opportunities for young children to engage in physical activity** and stay active throughout the day.

- **Give direct and specific encouragement to enhance children’s sense of achievement**

Provide more opportunities for children to learn and try something new. Praise them and give them verbal encouragement to build up a sense of achievement and self-confidence, thereby enabling them to face challenges. Bear in mind, however, not to reward children with foods or screen-time activities.

II. Parent-child physical games

Parent-child physical games not only help young children accumulate an adequate amount of physical activity per day, but also promote their motor development and enhance parent-child relationships.

The Department of Health has designed a series of parent-child physical games that can be easily played at home, with the aim of “creating unlimited possibilities within limited space”. Every game has different training targets, such as improving balance and coordination, strengthening gross and fine motor skills, and training the ability to catch and throw. Also, these physical games can better cultivate parent-child relationships regardless of location and weather conditions.

When young children participate in parent-child physical activities, parents can encourage them to modify or create game rules. This allows them to develop their creativity and have fun in the activities.



III. Safety measures

Parents can put in place measures to prevent young children from getting injured during a physical activity and follow the safety rules below:

- Put edge protectors on sharp corners of furniture (e.g. storage cabinet and table) to prevent children from injury from bumping into them.
- Remove and tidy up items on the ground (e.g. wire, toy, curtain string) to prevent children from tripping over.
- Remove furniture (e.g. table and chairs) to create more space for physical activity at home.
- Go to cushioned playgrounds to reduce the risk of injuries.
- Young children should be accompanied by adults when using playground facilities such as slides, seesaws or swings.
- Tell children not to run, jump, or chase each other when using playground facilities (e.g. slides) to prevent them from falling from height.
- Avoid vigorous level of physical activity one hour before and after meal to avoid indigestion.
- Stop to rest or seek medical advice if children feel sick (e.g. having difficulty in breathing, turning pale, feeling dizzy or nauseous) when doing physical activity.
- Ride bicycle on a cycling track and wear protective gears such as helmets and knee pads.
- Check out the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) as well as the weather and environment during outdoor activities. Avoid vigorous activities if the temperature is high, or if the humidity is too high or too low, or if the air quality is poor.
- When the UV index is at the moderate level or above, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light, long-sleeved clothing and apply sun-screen lotion to block both UVA and UVB rays during outdoor activities.
- Warm up before exercising and cool down afterwards.

IV. Home-school co-operation

Family and school play an important role in promoting physical activity among young children. Both parties should adopt the same strategy and co-operate with each other. Parents should take the initiative to communicate and co-operate with the school and to arrange adequate physical activity for their children after school.

Here are some useful tips:

- Learn about the arrangement of physical activity at school. If possible, join the activity.
- Share views with your children's school on building a healthy school. Participate in the home-school working group for setting up healthy school policy.
- Enrol in physical activity organised by the school or in the community (e.g. hobby group, outdoor activity and workshop). Learn about physical activity and related skills.
- Guide children to set a goal for physical activity and use "Little Healthy Fighter's Healthy Living Logbook" to keep a log of daily physical activities, so as to develop the habit of exercising.
- Inform the school of changes in the health status of your children so that necessary arrangements can be made.



Little Healthy Fighter's Healthy Living Logbook

Let's Scan the QR code: Health Education Resources

"StartSmart@school.hk" Campaign



Posters



Letter to Parents



Videos



Healthy Tips



Recipe Sharing Platform
(Chinese version only)



"Healthy Drinks at School" Charter



Parent-child Physical Games



Health Guide



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