

Exploring

infants and toddlers



Capital District
Child Care Council

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2

Baby Body-Building Basics

From birth, babies are learning many new things as they grow and their brains develop. This is an important time to start encouraging babies to participate in physical activities. The development of gross motor skills is important, as it is needed throughout life and has a significant effect on all other areas of development. Remember that these skills develop in order, for instance toddlers need to be able to walk before they are able to run. Here are some pointers to keep in mind and activities to try as infants develop movement in their arms and legs.

- ✓ Give babies plenty of time on a clean and safe floor to lie on their tummies and learn how to support their necks and eventually roll over and crawl.
- ✓ Encourage babies to reach for items of interest, like a rattle or stuffed animal.
- ✓ Play hand games with babies like clapping hands and playing peek-a-boo.
- ✓ Make sure that games and activities are gentle, enjoyable and initiated when babies are ready to play. Children's enthusiasm for movement is very important.
- ✓ Provide toddlers with opportunities to play ball games. You can take them outside to do this or give them light balls they can throw or roll at targets for inside play.
- ✓ Play catch with toddlers. They may need some coaching at first. Start close together with a large soft ball.
- ✓ Plan toddler activities that involve jumping, hopping, running, galloping and other types of movement that help them explore how they move. Simply jumping like a frog, walking like a duck, or flying like a bird make great toddler games.
- ✓ Enjoy walks around the neighborhood.



**Activity
helps develop
body intelligence
and coordination**