



Physical health and muscle development are important parts of a child's overall well-being. When children and families practice healthy behaviors, this will lead to healthy development. As their large and small muscle skills develop, this allows children to better explore and discover the world around them.

In this domain your child will develop skills in these specific areas:

Health and Safety: Over time, children learn to identify unsafe situations and ways to respond to them. As they grow, children develop basic skills that help them become independent and take care of their own needs.

Large Muscle (Gross Motor) Development: Children develop large-muscle control, strength, and coordination to help them move.

Small Muscle (Fine Motor) Development: Children develop small-muscle control, strength and coordination, which will help with writing and drawing skills.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

BOOKS

BABIES & TODDLERS

Play Rhymes by Marc Brown

Clap Hands by Helen Oxenbury

*From Head to Toe** by Eric Carle

The Farmer and the Dell by Mary Maki Rae

Yummy Yucky by Leslie Patricelli

PRESCHOOLERS

*My Five Senses** by Alike

*Growing Vegetable Soup** by Lois Ehlert

The Edible Pyramid by Loreen Leedy

Good Enough to Eat by Lizzy Rockwell

At the Supermarket by Anne Rockwell

Ready, Set, Skip! by Jane O'Connor

Changes, Changes by Pat Hutchins

Get Up and Go by Nancy Carlson

** Available in Spanish*

All books available through the Rhode Island Library system

Learning About Food

ACTIVITIES

Young children enjoy exploring foods and learning to feed themselves.



BABIES

Feeding time is a great time to bond with your baby—sing and tell stories. Babies also enjoy it when you describe the foods you are eating together. When your child begins to eat solid foods, talk about and describe the food you are eating: What does the food taste like? How does it smell? What color is it? What does it feel like?



TODDLERS

Toddlers love to mimic the adults around them. Provide opportunities for your toddler to help in the kitchen or play with items like containers, wooden spoons, pots and pans. As you do your grocery shopping, talk about the foods you are purchasing. Name the foods and their colors. Smell them and talk about how you will prepare them.



PRESCHOOLERS

Cooking with your child, whether it is pretend cooking or real cooking, is a great time for bonding. Play along when your child offers you pretend food—ask what it is, talk about how good it tastes. In the kitchen, your child can help with small tasks like setting the table, pouring, mashing, mixing, and spreading. Be sure to talk about measurements, colors, and textures, and following a recipe.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Additional Domains:



TIPS

- Safety first! When trying new foods, be sure to cut pieces into manageable bites. Talk with your baby's doctor about what foods to avoid when your child is young. For toddlers, work on a plan to introduce new foods. For preschoolers, be sure to cut up grapes and small tomatoes in half.
- Create a pretend kitchen by saving cleaned and empty cartons and containers like: cereal boxes, margarine, yogurt containers. Avoid using containers with sharp edges.
- Remember children may need to try things multiple times before they can decide if they like it.

REFLECTIONS

- Make a list on the back of new healthy foods your child has tried or you would like to try together. Remember children may need to try things multiple times before they can decide if they like it.
What new healthy foods has your child tried? What new foods can you try together? Use the back of the card to write down your reflections.

Watch Me Move

Young children are developing control, strength, and coordination of large muscles such as arms and legs.

ACTIVITIES



BABIES

Babies are motivated by curiosity. They explore and are attracted to objects around them. While laying, sitting, or standing comfortably with your baby, place a toy slightly out of reach. Encourage your child to reach for or move towards the toy. Observe and celebrate your baby's efforts.



TODDLERS

Toddlers are on the move and they are learning to move their bodies. Provide safe places for them to run, jump, climb, roll, and toss. Look for opportunities for your child to use their muscles, like climbing up stairs, jumping off a small curb, pushing or pulling toys, moving small riding toys, and tossing and catching balls.



PRESCHOOLERS

Preschoolers are using their large muscles when they climb, run, balance, and swing. As their skills develop, they are better able to throw, catch, or kick a ball with accuracy. Playing a game of catch or providing your child with a basket to throw into will help develop these skills.

Encourage your preschooler to explore other forms of movement—running, jumping, skipping, galloping, hopping and dancing.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Additional Domains:



TIPS

- It is important that you and your child to enjoy these activities together. Repeat the activity as long as your child is interested. If at any point your child gets frustrated, take a break.
- Music is a great way to encourage your child to move. Make sure to join in and move your large muscles together.
- If you have any concerns about your child's motor development, be sure to mention it to your child's doctor.
- Make use of what is available in your community. Visit playgrounds, neighborhood community or recreation centers to encourage your child to keep active.

REFLECTIONS

- What is the newest way your child is using large muscles? What is your child still working on? Write down 1 or 2 ways you can encourage your child to help build these skills.

Putting Together and Pulling Apart

Your child will develop control, strength and coordination of small muscles, such as hands and fingers.

ACTIVITIES

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Additional Domains:



BABIES

Babies are very interested in touching and feeling interesting objects and materials. By grasping at toys and shaking or banging things to make noise, or even holding tight to an adult's finger babies learn to use their hands and fingers for a purpose. Give your child lots of opportunities to reach for or hold to different kinds of toys. Play games where you pick different toys out of a basket to hand to your child. Encourage your child to bang two objects together or to pull things apart, like stacking cups or large knobbed puzzles.



TODDLERS

Toddlers are learning to use their small muscles to explore and get things done. They enjoy opening and closing containers, filling and emptying baskets or buckets, and stacking blocks. Give your toddler a basket of different plastic containers that have lids, and work together to match the lids to the containers. Then, help your child to pull the lids off. You can also stack the containers, put smaller ones inside of bigger ones, or find toys to put into each of the containers.



PRESCHOOLERS

Preschoolers are getting much better at using their small muscles to solve problems, like puzzles, stacking and building, and using safety scissors or pens/pencils. Give your child lots of opportunities to work on puzzles, to use play dough, or to create art with markers, crayons, safety scissors, or tape.

TIPS

- Children sometimes enjoy helping to put things away, like the silverware, or picking up toys to put in a basket. They will use their small muscles to do these things, and also learn that cleaning up together can be fun!
- Children of all ages love to put things together and then pull them apart. Don't be surprised if your child builds a tower and then knocks it over right away, or makes something with play dough and then quickly smashes it to make something new. While it may not seem like it, children are learning from both the putting together *and* the pulling apart.
- As children develop small muscle skills, they sometimes get frustrated when they can't do what they want to - like opening a container or tying shoes. Encourage them to keep trying as much as they can, but be sure to step in to help if they seem to get too frustrated.

REFLECTIONS

- Write down one or two everyday activities you would like to do with your child that will help the development of small muscles.