



Month 4: Upper Body Development Introduction

Objectives of this month:

1. Caregivers will learn the importance of upper body development as it relates to gross and fine motor activities.
2. Caregivers will learn fun and easy ways of incorporating upper body development activities into their environments.
3. Children will strengthen upper body musculature and become more coordinated when recruiting arms, chest, back, abdomen and neck through fun weight-bearing activities.
4. Children will explore movement and their physical environments through fun activities which aid in the growth and development of upper body segments.

Importance of Upper Body Strength/Conditioning

- Developing strength of musculature can directly increase skeletal growth/strength – stronger muscles mean stronger bones.
- Practiced skills and increasing strength lead to the ability to learn new skills more efficiently.
- Proximal shoulder and trunk strength results in easier development and more control of fine motor skills – a child needs proximal stability to have distal control.
- Appropriate upper body strength, especially around trunk and neck, leads to improved posture. Optimal posture then translates into improved respiration, less difficulty eating and decreased likelihood of choking, and improved speech.
- Age-appropriate muscle strength will lead to less likelihood of movement related injuries.

Importance of Upper Body Coordination

- Practiced skills will increase movement speed, as the relationship between mind and body (sensory-motor) is constantly tested.
- Becoming more coordinated, in association with segment strength, means fewer bumps, bruises and spills during exploration.
- Improving bilateral coordination of the extremities strengthens the relationship between the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

References:

SPARC: Sports and Recreation New Zealand. (2008). Upper body development: Climbing, hanging and swinging. Active Movement.

Parry Sound District Best Start Network

Developmental Expectations for Upper Body Development

- 0-2 months:** Clears nose when on tummy
- 2-4 months:** Baby propping on elbows & holding head at 90 degrees
Baby rolling from side to back, side to tummy & back to side
- 4-6 months:** Baby pushing up on extended arms
Baby can free one arm to reach in forearm support & enjoys playing with a toy in that position
Some babies may start pushing up partially to hands & knees
Baby rolling tummy to back and back to tummy
Baby pivoting on tummy
- 6-9 months:** Pushes up to hands & knees & rocks forwards & back
In 4-point, frees one hand to reach for toy
Attempts to move forward & crawling is achieved
- 9-12 months:** Crawling is primary method of mobility, & able to climb over obstacles & furniture
Begins to creep/crawl up the stairs
- 12-15 months:** Child continues to crawl up stairs even though they have mastered walking
- 15-18 months:** Child is crawling up and down stairs
Child climbs age-appropriate playground equipment with supervision/assistance
Child is climbing up onto furniture (chairs & couches)
- 19-21 months:** Child climbs on, off & over furniture
- 31-36 months:** Child climbs ladders & slides on outdoor playground equipment with supervision only
Child copies movements accurately & participates well in action songs
Child will wheelbarrow walk a short distance if supported proximally at hips or pelvis
- 48 months:** Child climbs outdoor playground equipment independently
Child capable of forward tumble
Child is able to wheelbarrow walk with adult supporting a shins or feet
- 60 months:** Child is able to complete 10 jumping jacks, moving arms and legs in a coordinated fashion
Child is able to hang from the monkey bars, holding body weight for at least 20 seconds
Child is able to perform 3 or more push-ups from his knees

References:

Cornish, Andree., Summersby, Louise D. (2006). Gross motor development from birth to six years. One Kids Place (OKP).

Folio, M. Rhonda., Fewell, Rebecca R. (2002). Peabody motor development chart. Austin (TX): Pro-ed.