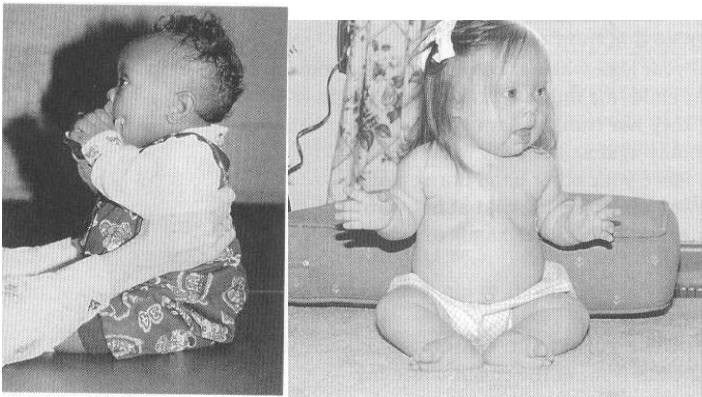


Month 7: Balance

Infant

Sitting Balance

Be sure to place your infant in supported sitting from a very young age (3-4 months). Provide as much support as your baby requires to maintain this sitting position, but as your child's trunk strength and sitting balance improve, you should be able to reduce your support. You can also place a nursing pillow or cushions around your baby so that if they do fall over while learning to sit, they will be protected.

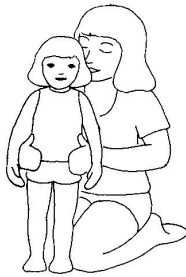


Once your baby is sitting on their own (around 6 months) challenge their sitting balance even further by placing their toys just out of reach in front of them, to the side and even behind them. Can they stretch out to reach their toy and return to sitting position? If so, their sitting balance is getting even better.



Standing Balance

When your infant is just learning to stand on their own, try to help them stand in front of a mirror by holding their pelvis or thighs only. Try to reduce your child's tendency to grab you or hold your hands by giving them a toy to hold while you are helping them stand. As their standing balance improves, try to move your hands even lower – from pelvis to hips to lower thighs, to calves and finally to ankles.



2-2

Tall Kneeling Balance

Children will often play in tall kneel at a surface where they can use their upper extremities for support. Your goal is to help your child maintain tall kneel position without this support. Your infant will probably move from a crawling to a low kneel position (bottom resting on lower legs). Try to blow bubbles or hold a ball or balloon up just beyond their reach, encouraging them to come up into a tall kneel position. Can they hold this position and play here for a few seconds?



Head, Shoulders Knees and Toes on a Dime

Cut out a circle from construction paper that is large enough for your child's feet. Do one for yourself too!

Place the circle on the floor and sing "Head and Shoulders".

The object is to stay on the circle.

Kicking

Just having the toddlers practice their kicking helps improve their balance. While they are walking around the room, place balloons or lightweight balls in their path causing them to "kick" them accidentally. They will eventually kick the items intentionally, and this encourages them to stand on one foot for short periods of time.

Stepping Up

Once your infant is up and on his feet, place small step stools at various locations around your home to encourage your child to step up. Placing the stool in front of couches to help your child can climb up, or at sinks and counters where your child can also hold on to some support while stepping up is most beneficial. Praise your child's efforts to step up and down from these stools, and be sure to provide them with as much assistance and supervision as they need to keep them safe.

Mix it Up

Now that your infant is up and walking, be sure to change up the surfaces that they are walking on to further challenge their balance skills – can they walk in the house on bare feet, as well as while wearing shoes? Can they walk as well on the hardwood floor as they walk on the carpet? Can they maintain their balance as they walk over thresholds in your home? What happens if there is an obstacle in their path? Can they step around it or over it without falling down? Take your new walker outside; how does he do on grass, inclines, sand, snow, while wearing his snowsuit? Changing the walking surface, as well as what your child is wearing will also affect his balance until he becomes a proficient walker!!

References:

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