

Parry Sound District Best Start Network

Month 4: Upper Body Development Activities

Toddler

Push-Ups

Gently support toddler under the chest and hips. Lift his/her body carefully. The child's hands will extend and remain on the floor and will support his/her upper body with the arms. Note: it is important to support the lower back and not allow him to arch his back.

Wheelbarrow

Support the child's thighs as he/she walks on her hands. Make sure his/her back remains straight. For more support, if needed, hold the toddler closer to the waistline.

Lay Back



Step 1



Step 2

1. Sit with your toddler lying between your bent legs, as shown in Step one above. Let her hold your thumbs, while you support her wrists and forearms with your fingers.
2. Slowly pull her to a sitting position (let her use her arms and abdominal muscles as much as possible) as shown in Step two above.
3. Slowly lower your toddler back to the floor.
4. Repeat five or six times.

Hip-Lift



1. Lay your toddler on her back, with her knees bent and her feet flat on the floor. Slip your hands around her waist, at the same time supporting her back (see Step 1 above).
2. Help your toddler lift the trunk of her body 2 to 4 inches off the floor; encourage her to use her leg and buttock muscles (see Step 2 above). Hold for 2 to 3 seconds. Tell your toddler that he/she is making a bridge and you have to drive a car or walk a small doll under the bridge.
3. Lower your toddler slowly back to the floor, keeping her knees bent.

Monkey Climb

Climbing is a great way to strengthen the upper body. Start with supervising your child climbing up stairs on hands and feet. Allow your child to explore climbers at the playground, supervising appropriately as he/she climbs up the ladder of slides and climbers. At home, in the backyard, you can place a ladder flat in the grass and ask the child to climb along the rungs on hands and feet. You can progress this by creating a small incline, propping one end of the ladder up on a stable surface – supervise closely as your child climbs up and down.

Mom and Dad's Helper

Your toddler is old enough to help mom and dad around the house. Not only is this a great opportunity for strengthening, but it brings your child much pride and can improve self-esteem. Depending on the age of your toddler, some activities that can improve upper body strength include:

- Carrying grocery bags in from the car
- Helping to push or carry recycling box to the curb
- Shoveling snow, raking leaves, or digging in the garden
- Carrying watering cans to water outside or indoor plants
- Pulling items in a wagon when out for a short walk
- Pushing a small grocery cart
- Carrying books or any item with weight around the home – get creative!

Open & Close

A sing-a long with actions. Have your child sit or stand in front of you to sing along and follow the actions.

Open, shut them, open, shut them

Give a little clap

Open, shut them, open, shut them,

Put them in your lap.

References:

Best Start. (2005). Have a ball: A toolkit for physical activity and the early Years. Toronto (ON): Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse.

Canadian Child Care Federation, Canadian Institute of Child Health. (2004). Moving and growing (2nd ed.). Physical activities for twos, threes and fours. Ottawa (ON): Canadian Child Care Federation and the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

Invest in Kids Foundation. (2001). What a child will be depends on you and me: A resource kit for a child's first five years. Toronto (ON): Invest in Kids Foundation.

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