



## Handout Essential Child 1:3

### Body Awareness & Movement & fine motor development Birth to Six Months

#### Did you know?

- The body teaches the brain. Movement and play prepare the brain for learning. When children are engaged in physical activity, the cognitive parts of the brain are stimulated. The motor system is the first to develop and is functional before the sensory system is complete. The brain areas controlling movement of the head and neck muscles develop before those of the arms and trunk.
- Movement plays an important role in the baby's exploration of his surrounding environment. Baby begins to learn that he creates a certain motion and whether it was created outside of his body.
- Rapid movement excites a baby while slow, rhythmical motion has a calming effect. Knowing how different movement patterns affect your baby can enable you to help guide your baby's development and influence his moods.
- Movement in a variety of directions provides the experience a baby needs to learn how to balance and gain control over his body. These movements include swaying (side to side movement), bouncing (up and down movement), and walking (back and forth movement).
- Movement also plays a part in discovery of the body. Body awareness is the process that a baby learns the names, movements, functions, and locations of body parts
- By this age your baby will be reaching with both arms, bringing fingers to mouth, putting objects in mouth, start grabbing at feet, squeeze things, swatting at objects and trying to reach.

#### Things to do at home...

- Get to know your baby. Learn what movements calm your baby and which movements excite him. If loud noises and rough housing upset your baby, then entertain him with gentle play. If too much excitement makes your baby frantic, limit the length of play times and the intensity of the activity.
- Massage will help your baby learn about their body. Use long strokes, short strokes and soft and firm movements. Talk to your baby as you do this eg here are your toes.
- Don't wrap baby except for sleep. When they are awake, let them have the freedom to stretch and move.
- Stimulate baby while they are on their tummy to encourage reaching eg put toys and balls etc close by and move slowly near their hands.
- Carry your baby in different positions to encourage vestibular stimulation, which will help with body awareness.
- Lay on back and hand balls, objects to encourage swatting
- Give rattles and squeeze toys to play with
- Ensure everything within reach is safe (non choke hazard) and non toxic as it will end up in the mouth.