



Handout Essential Child 3:3

Body Awareness & Movement & fine motor development 12 to 18 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 child's exploration of his surrounding environment.
- 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). Now that they are trying to walk, they are experiencing movement from another plane. They are now vertical, and this impacts their vision and balance
- 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.
- Body awareness is acquired as they practise new motor skills over and over. they also develop an inner sense that one side of his body is different from the other side (laterality) and understands his relative position in space (spatial awareness).
- By this age your baby will be throwing objects, placing blocks on top of each other, making marks with crayons, putting large blocks together (lego)

Things to do at home...

- Have your child clap, stamp, step & dance to rhythms. This movement helps him gain control and balance. Use songs & rhymes that name the parts of the body. They help to teach the names of the body parts as baby discovers them.
- Lots of active play- tunnels, climbing, rolling, swinging will help them understand their body, where it is in space and what it can do. This develops large muscles, needed for control of smaller muscles.
- Allow for repetition to develop skills. Although it may seem tedious at times, Repetition is the key!! Letting baby drop things from their high chair, open and close things and mouth everything, this is helping them discover their body.
- Massage becomes tricky at this age, as they won't stay still for long. Take every opportunity to give them a squeeze, a rub, a pat to help them develop body awareness- where do their fingers stop?
- Play "rolling games" where they are rolled into blankets/ sheets and then roll out. Great motor planning needed for this game!
- Provide opportunities to play with crayons, paper and paint
- Blocks and stacking toys, balls, large puzzles, leggo