

## Did you know...

Nurturing your baby provides the sense of safety that allows her to explore her environment?

Babies learn through movement? When babies move, they build strength, brain connections and knowledge about the world and the people in it.

Carrying or gently rocking babies not only soothes them, but may improve coordination, balance, muscle tone and visual alertness?

Infants need time on their tummies daily to build strong neck and back muscles and to help them learn how to move and control their bodies?

That 40% of 3 month old infants are watching TV/video/DVDs, even though screen time is not recommended for children under two.

### HELP YOUR CHILD BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE EVERY DAY.

An infant (birth through 11 months) is physically active when rolling, reaching, crawling, and cruising. Newborns enjoy the movement of being carried, rocked and snuggled close to the bodies of their family members. When infants are a few weeks old, they need plenty of opportunities for free movement and exploration indoors and outdoors every day. Pay close attention to your baby's wants and needs and you will discover endless options for working physical activity into each day!

### DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR INFANTS...

- Develops their brains and increases their ability to learn.
- Builds and maintains healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Promotes good sleep.
- Helps them stay at a healthy weight.
- Develops a healthy heart and mind.
- Develops their independence.
- Develops movement skills like sitting, crawling and reaching.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND YOUR FAMILY

Most of us don't get enough physical activity daily, but it is fun and something you can enjoy together as a family. Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages and it is never too soon to begin being physically active. You can help your baby be active by gently interacting and playing with her every day. Include her in family outings and bring along a blanket so that she can explore once you reach your destination.

### TIPS FOR BEING ACTIVE WITH YOUR INFANT

- Make it fun! When physical activity is enjoyable, your whole family will WANT to play!
- Babies are naturally active and curious about the world. Encourage her to explore in safe environments with your caring supervision and involvement.
- Be active together! Use physical activity as family bonding time. When you play together, she has the opportunity and encouragement to try and master new skills such as: rolling over, sitting up, crawling, pulling up and reaching for and grasping objects.
- Be a great role model for healthy habits. Add physical activity to the things you do already. Park farther away from the door when you go shopping. Walk to get your mail instead of driving up to the mailbox. Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Provide engaging objects to use and explore to support physical development and active play:

#### *For younger infants*

- Rattles
- Mobiles
- Board books
- Unbreakable mirrors

#### *For older infants*

- Balls
- Dolls
- Solid furniture to use for pulling up, standing and cruising.

- Play with your baby! Enjoy the time to discover the world together.

- Have tummy time 2-3 times each day. This means laying her on a clean, safe and open area on the floor on her tummy. Place some favorite toys, an unbreakable mirror or board books nearby to encourage her to reach and explore. Be sure to respond to signs of frustration. Get down on the floor face-to-face to talk, sing and play with her.
- Give her plenty of safe opportunities every day to move on the open floor or on a clean blanket outside.
- Play simple games that use a variety of movements with her: Pat a Cake, This Little Piggy, How Big is Baby, Wheels on the Bus, etc.
- Limit time spent in confining equipment like infant carriers, seats and swings to less than 15 minutes while awake.
- Limit the use of strollers.
- Set up a safe area inside your home where active play is A-OK—bad weather is no excuse for not being active!
- Schedule a regular daily time for physical activity—maybe an hour before or after dinner go for a family walk or simply roll a ball back and forth outdoors.
- Set your weekend in motion by planning active family fun. Try a hike, a walk through the park, or a dip in the pool. Include your infant, but remember to bring along a blanket so she can explore freely when you take a break.

### NO SCREEN TIME FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWO!

What is screen time? It's any time spent in front of a screen, for example, watching television or DVDs, using the computer, smart phones, and/or playing video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics, an organization of children's doctors, recommends that children under two years of age have no screen time.

Too much screen time isn't good for your infant's health or her physical and mental development. It puts children at an increased risk for obesity. The more time she spend in front of a screen, the less time she is actively exploring her environment and developing important physical skills like sitting, crawling and reaching for objects.

### TIPS FOR TUNING OUT AND TURNING OFF

- Turn off the TV. Get down on the floor with your baby and play together. Sing silly songs that have movements like "This Little Piggy" or make up some of your own that include her name. Go outside with her and explore in the grass or watch the children coming home from school. Turn on music and dance.
- Move the TVs in your house out of bedrooms and to a central location like the family room.
- Wait to watch adult-only shows until after your children have gone to bed.

**“You are your baby’s guide and first teacher—the best person to help her learn how to live a healthy life! Instead of screen time, focus on positive activities like physical activity to help your baby grow up healthy.”**