



Physical Development

► Children begin life with limited ability to control their movements. Within a few years, they are able to run, jump, laugh, sing, and write with a pencil.

► Large muscles (those that control movements like crawling, walking, hopping, throwing, catching, and balancing) develop before small muscles (those that control the wrist and hands in activities like drawing, cutting, stringing beads, building block towers).

► Developing muscles and maintaining a healthy body are critical to future reading, writing, and math success.

► Because so many physical changes are happening at once, proper nutrition is essential.

► Children need to eat more frequently than adults so that they have enough nutrients to meet the demands of their rapidly growing bodies.

► Help children develop physically by allowing them to eat when they are hungry and by encouraging them to exercise.

Resources For Adults

Beatty, J. (1997). *Observing Development of the Young Child*. 4th Edition. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Pica, R. (1998). *Moving and Learning Across the Curriculum*

Portman, P. (1995). *Play Right* (a manual of creative movement and ball handling)

Indiana's Child Care Collection videos: *Structured Play: Gross Motor Activities for Everyday*, and *New Games for Child Care Centers*

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: AGES 2-5

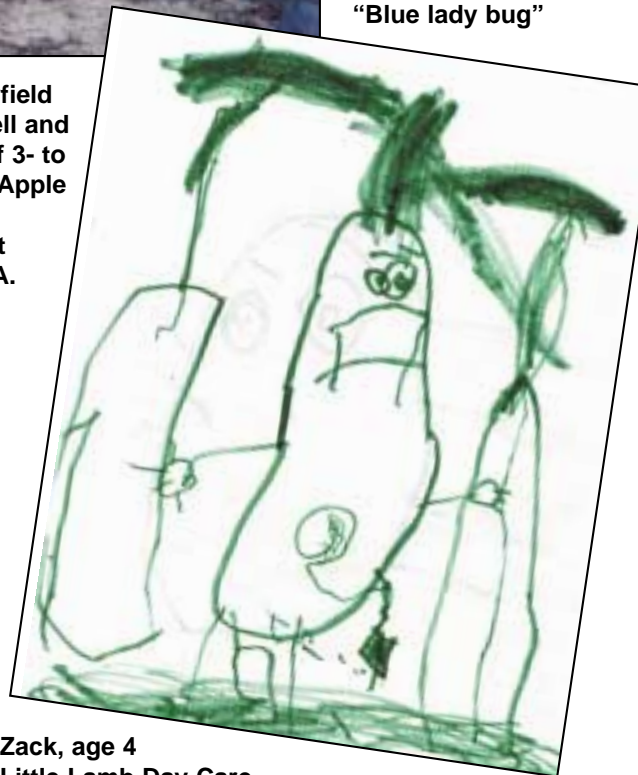


Breona, age 4
Little Lamb Daycare
"Blue lady bug"



Erin, age 4
Little Lamb Day Care
"Big tadpole"

Becky Satterfield and Hope Bell and their class of 3- to 5-year-olds, Apple Tree Child Development Center YMCA.



Zack, age 4
Little Lamb Day Care
"Green paterkiller"

"Are you ready to listen or do you need to run first?" This is one way to greet young children who are about to set out on a walk through the woods. Young children have more energy than even they sometimes know what to do with. If parents and child care providers allow them to use up some of that energy, children may be more likely to listen to instructions about how to carefully cross a bridge in order to get to the tadpoles.

Adults have been making observations about children's physical development for a long time. In 1907, Stanley Hall, an educator from Massachusetts, wrote this: "Muscles are in a most intimate and peculiar sense the organs of the will. They have built all the roads, cities, and machines in the world, written all the books, spoken all the words, and in fact, done everything that man has accomplished with matter." These days, we talk about children's gross and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills are the ones used in walking, running, jumping, climbing and throwing. To get to the bridge in the woods, the children in the picture above had to climb

two "mountains." One was made of mulch, the other was a more challenging hill to climb.

Once the children crossed the bridge, they fished for tadpoles. Having scooped up either a tadpole or some "Happy Birthday algae," they were then given the opportunity to run again. The object of the run this time was to find their way back to the starting point by following a circular path.

The great outdoors provides endless opportunities for children to develop physically. Parents and providers should look for large, open spaces, in addition to parks or playgrounds.

The Minnetrista Cultural Center and Oakhurst Gardens Nature Reserve is one such space, and best of all, as far as young children are concerned, it is full of wild animals. Three of them can be seen in the drawings the children did once they were back in their classroom. As you can see from their pictures, Erin saw a "big tadpole," Breona spent time with a "blue lady bug," and Zack had a friendly encounter with a green "paterkiller."

Activities for Children

- Walking and climbing.
- Riding bikes (with helmets!).
- Helping around the house or classroom: putting things away, sweeping the floor.
- Dancing to music.
- Playing hide and seek.
- Playing ball: throwing, catching and kicking.
- Playing on swings and slides.
- Throwing bean-bags at targets.
- Crawling through, under and around things.
- Placing a piece of masking tape on the floor as a tightrope that children can walk on.
- Digging in a garden and planting seeds or plants.

Resources For Children

(Start babies off by reading to them from books with pictures of other babies.)

Tickle, Tickle; Clap Hands; and All Fall Down by Helen Oxenbury

Peepo! and Peek-a-Boo by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

Baby Dance by Ann Taylor

Here Are My Hands by Bill Martin, Jr.

From Head To Toe by Eric Carle

The Foot Book by Dr. Seuss

All By Myself by Mercer Meyer

Piggies by Audrey and Don Wood

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear by Michael Hague

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: 0-6 MONTHS

Infants undergo tremendous physical changes during their first six months of life. They gain weight at an astonishing rate and their heads grow nearly 3 inches in the first 8 months.

Infants don't just gain weight and out-grow their hats during their first six months. They are also building strength and stamina, and increasing their muscle control. They do all this even though at first they are only awake for an average of 8 out of each day's 24 hours.

Each child develops at his or her own pace. Differences in the area of physical development can range from one month to four to six months for each particular skill.

By six months of age, most (but not all) babies can:

- Roll from stomach to back, or from back to stomach
- Wave, kick and squirm
- Reach for toys or other interesting



Lily, age 3 months

things that are nearby

- Grasp an object and transfer it from one hand to the other
- Lift head and chest and hold themselves up with their arms
- Sit up with support

Important Considerations:

- Health care professionals recommend

that babies sleep on their backs.

- Babies explore their world in many ways, including putting objects in their mouths to see how they feel. Small objects are potential choking hazards. Parents and caregivers must keep small objects away from babies.

- A baby can drown in less than an inch of water. Parents and caregivers should never leave a baby unattended at bath time.

- Recent research on infant brain development has shown that interactions with parents and caregivers help shape the developing brain. Parents and providers are encouraged to touch, talk to, read to, and sing to babies, to enhance their overall development.

- Shaking a baby can cause severe brain damage, and even death. No matter how upset or stressed parents or caregivers may feel, they should never shake a baby.

