

9 Benefits of Daily Movement for Young Children

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Excerpt:

We know daily movement and exercise is essential to longevity in adults. But daily movement is just as important in our earliest days and years. The physical development, emotional and social learning, and attitudes young children develop about movement all start from the beginning.

For young children, daily movement is a developmental necessity. Movement and exploration is how infants and toddlers make sense of the world. Movement builds and refines fine and gross motor skills. Movement helps children develop language, and become independent.

From day one

From the day your child is born, movement should be a part of your child's daily routine.

Infants should be physically active several times a day, especially through interactive floor-based play, according to the [World Health Organization](#). The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends at least 30-minutes of tummy time with an adult each day.

Toddlers aged one and older should be engaging in at least three-hours of movement each day, according to the [the UK's National Health Service](#); that should include one hour of vigorous activity once your child reaches age five.

Here are 9 major benefits of daily movement for your young child:

1. Strengthens bones

We all want the best for our children. It's why we buy organic carrots and eat kale and shun Red Dye 40. But we're kind of just hoping for the best a lot of the time.

There is actual data, however, that proves there's something you can do to strengthen your child's bones and muscles. It's [daily movement and exercise](#).

[Here's why](#): early childhood is the point in life where most of your new bone development happens. Your skeleton is growing and your bones are getting more dense. In most people, bones hit their maximum strength and density by mid-to late 20; the amount of bone mass at that time will determine health for the rest of your life.

2. Gross motor development

Gross motor development refers to those whole-body movements that are so important for your young child's growth. Think: things you'd do at the gym—but for a child.

Things like rolling over, crawling, walking, or jumping are movements that use the large muscles in your child's body. Something that seems so minute, tummy time, is actually helping your child begin to develop and understand balance, coordination, and body control. These skills will help your child develop muscle and strength for doing things most of us don't think twice about, like standing on one leg to put on our pants.

3. Fine motor skills

Your child is learning so much at once! As they engage in their whole body play, they're also using their hands as tools in exploration.

As young children use their hands to grip, squeeze, and manipulate objects, they're developing hand strength and coordination. This type of movement aids in developing their fine motor skills.

Fine motor skills require control and dexterity. Examples of fine motor use include drawing, writing, sorting. Each time your child picks up a block, sorts rocks, or opens a door knob, they're exercising this fine motor skill muscle.

4. Cognitive development

Daily movement can even have a positive impact on cognitive development in preschool children, [according to research](#).

Even a 12-minute exercise session is enough to improve children's selective attention, the Centers for Disease Control says. Physical activity can also improve your child's working memory, helping them retain more information.

And here's a Vivvi pro tip: if your child (or okay, you) are stuck in a negative spiral, consider some quick, physical movement. The CDC says exercise will increase your child's executive functioning, by increasing oxyhemoglobin levels. That can help executive functioning—the ability to regulate thoughts, actions, emotions, and attention.

5. Early STEM literacy

Have you ever noticed how often little ones bonk their heads? That spatial awareness just isn't there yet. The gross motor development combined with cognitive benefits lays the groundwork for your child to begin to wrap their mind around spatial awareness.

Through movement, your child begins to make sense of the world around them. They start to conceptualize distance and space and even dip their toes in numeracy and physics.

6. Language development

Movement and language are closely linked in early childhood, and daily movement can support your child's language learning and academic achievement.

Movement supports your child's developing communication skills by enhancing their vocabulary. When they engage in movement, they encounter a plethora of ['delicious' descriptive words](#) that relate to actions, sensations, and emotions.

Movement can literally stimulate your child's brain, too. When combined with rhythm, movement stimulates the frontal lobes of your child's brain, improving learning potential by up to 90-percent when [combined with language](#). Now you know why action songs are so important!

7. Emotional regulation

Help your child learn to regulate their emotions with movement. Physical movement can help your child regulate their feelings and find balance, control and grounding in times of turmoil.

[Daily movement](#) allows young children to release pent-up energy and emotions through their bodies, while stimulating endorphins to boost their mood and reduce stress.

Movement also reduces your child's cortisol levels which makes it easier for their brain to regulate emotions. Movement quiets anxiety, regulates moods and appetites, and gives children a chance to express their emotional energy physically.

8. Independence

All of these new skills combined bolsters your young child's confidence and independence.

As your child's gross and fine motor skills develop at a rapid pace alongside language, your child's independence will skyrocket. Imagine going from laying in a Snoo crying for milk, to being able to walk to your caregiver and say "milk, please". Movement gives independence and boosts self confidence.

9. Lifelong health

Starting a habit of daily movement at a young age ensures your child will grow up with a healthy attitude toward exercise and movement, even in their adult years. Here are 12 fun ways to [inspire a lifelong love of movement](#) in your child.

Model Good Behaviors

We talk a lot in early childhood education about modeling. Whether we notice it or not, the same way we model to our children how to use “please” and “thank you”, we’re modeling our values and priorities. Modeling good, healthy behaviors do make an impact on our children.

Help your child develop a love for movement and exercise by modeling your own movement. To ensure your child gets enough exercise as they get older, caregivers need to [set a foundation](#) for lifelong appreciation of movement.

Modeling good movement behavior might look like:

- Joining your young children for a walk in the park
- Actively moving and playing on play structures with them
- Taking your child with you to walk the dog
- Clearing space in a room for physical activity
- Doing yoga with your child

Wiggle Rooms

Our “Wiggle Rooms” are the star of the show on our Vivvi Campuses. Each of our “Wiggle Room” and outdoor spaces were designed with daily movement in mind.

Each space was intentionally created to provide hours of fun and exciting motor development. These clever play spaces are wide open, with both large toys that require whole body movement to engage with and smaller manipulatives that allow your child to exercise those fine motor muscles.