

Encourage Physical Activity

Parents can do a number of things for their babies to encourage physical activity. Each baby develops at his or her own pace, but here are a few ideas to share with parents.

- ✓ Newborns can be put on their stomachs while they are awake. This “tummy time” will help them practice lifting their heads to gain neck strength.
- ✓ For four month olds, parents can hold them up to reach for things.
- ✓ Five to six month olds are often sitting up well. Parents should observe whether their babies can move a toy from one hand and place it in their other hand. Transferring objects from one side of the body to the other is an important and exciting skill. Parents should make sure their baby has sufficient opportunities to move and play with their full range of movement to practice this and other skills.
- ✓ At seven to ten months old, most babies are crawling. Parents can encourage crawling by putting babies down and putting a toy nearby. Babies in this age range are also starting to pull themselves up on objects.
- ✓ At eleven to fifteen months old, they are starting to walk and are driven to practice this important new skill. Parents can encourage walking and make sure they have safe places to practice walking and be active.

Another action parents can take at any age to help encourage physical activity is only using the car seat for safety when they are in the car. Some parents may be reluctant to let their babies out of the car seat if they are afraid the baby might cry. However, car seats restrict movement and discourage physical activity if they are overused.

