

# Helping your child to learn by encouraging them to move

## What is movement play?

It's children's work, something they need to do that we cannot do for them. It's lying on your back and playing with your toes, spinning around until you are dizzy and falling over, crawling and rolling all over the floor, wriggling and jiggling and not sitting still. It's tipping and turning, swaying and sliding and being upside down. It's hard work and it's fun.

## Why is movement play important?

Movement is the way young children learn. They find out where their body ends and the world begins by playing with toes and fingers. They develop their large and small movements. They wriggle, roll and crawl and find a way of exploring the world around them. Movement helps children to develop socially too. Movement builds connections in the brain, so by encouraging a young child to move you are helping them to learn.



## How can we help our children?

Give them plenty of time and space. If they are spinning round and round, move things out of their way so they're safe. Make sure babies spend time on their backs and stomachs on the floor. Get down on the floor and play with them. You are the best thing your child has for climbing on, under and over. Dress them in clothes that are easy to move in. Make sure babies spend time with no socks on so they can play with their feet. If jumping on the sofa or bed is not ok then think of ways to give them this opportunity - for example, visit a family centre, go on a bouncy castle, keep an old piece of furniture just for playing on.

Take them to the park as often as you can and encourage them to swing and spin and climb. Children know what they need to do. They do not often do things they are not ready for. Let them climb trees and roll down grassy banks, but encourage them to ask you first so you can do a safety check. Let them read books lying on the floor or watch the TV upside down hanging over the edge of the chair. Think twice before you tell them to stop wriggling or stop them from walking backwards down the road holding your hand.

Our job is to keep them safe and then get out of their way so they can do what their bodies need to do. Join in as much as you can because this shows you value their play. Encourage them as much as possible and find ways to provide opportunities for moving. It will keep you fit and you might find you enjoy it. It's a great excuse to be a child again.

