

# Readiness to Learn at School

## Physical Health and Wellbeing

### What is it?

Physical health and wellbeing is physical readiness for school (not arriving at school hungry or tired), physical independence (well-coordinated movements), as well as gross motor skills (e.g., able to catch and throw a ball) and fine motor skills (e.g., able to handle crayons and pencils).

### Why is it important?

Children who are physically healthy and well are children who are prepared to succeed—at school and throughout life.

### What can I do to build my child's physical health and wellbeing?

Your child is constantly watching and learning from you. This makes you your child's first and best teacher of health and wellbeing. But you don't need to teach "a lesson"—just look for teachable moments. Start by watching your child. See what he or she is doing, then join in. Children learn by playing, so have fun and be confident that when you live a healthy lifestyle, your child is learning from you, day after day. And this is the best way to ensure your child enjoys school and is successful throughout life. For ideas for health and wellbeing, try some of the activities on this tip sheet. Although these activities are grouped into three ages (see footprints below) they may be suitable for children of different ages.



INFANT



TODDLER



PRESCHOOLER

Every day give your baby some "Tummy Time": While your baby is lying on his or her tummy, place interesting objects, such as shiny toys, on the ground and cheer while your baby reaches for them.

If your child enjoys it, give her or him a gentle massage. Talk in a soothing voice while you do this.

Give your child "Cheerios" or other safe finger foods as a snack. This provides practice in fine motor skills.

Give your infant items to hold and bang together. Talk and sing while he or she has fun making noise and practicing hand-eye coordination.

Play "Paper Scrunch": Give your baby some interesting paper to scrunch up or tear into pieces. Be sure to remove it before she or he tries to taste it.

Play "Copy Cat": You perform a simple action (e.g., smile, stick out your tongue, or clap) and cheer whenever your baby copies you.

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Do the “Mirror Dance”: You and your child dance to your favourite music in front of a large mirror. Also try “Freeze Dance,” where everyone has to freeze like a statue as soon as the music stops.

Provide a wash cloth and a little soapy water in a bowl and let your child wash plastic dolls or animals.

Take short walks together around the neighbourhood. This is a great time to play “I Spy” and “I Hear.” Practice climbing on and under playground equipment.

Offer finger-paints to your toddler and watch her or him create a masterpiece. Talk about what your child is painting.

Sing sing, sing—and dance! Especially fun and beneficial to children’s physical development are music and movement songs, such as See the Sleeping Bunnies, Hokey Pokey, and The Chicken Dance.

Go to the library and borrow books for your child. If there is a parent-child program that day, then stay, play and have fun.



At the grocery store, play the “I spy” shopping game with your child. Let your child place the items in your shopping cart. Encourage him or her to choose, then try eating new nutritious foods.

Make an indoor obstacle course, using pillows, chairs, pots, pans, measuring cups and water—anything and everything! Activities could include walking along a chalk line, jumping over a box, and crawling through a tunnel. Practice climbing stairs.



Play catch with a ball that is soft.

Find a sport, such as soccer, swimming or T-ball, that your child enjoys and sign him or her up for lessons at your local community centre.

Make a weekly “Meal Calendar” and let your child pick a meal that he or she will help prepare. Breakfast is an especially easy one to make, and it is said to be the most important meal of the day.

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