

Heidi's Tips and Activity Ideas for Strong Children (3yrs +)

These are suggestions only. Movements should be gentle. Never force a child's body into any position. If the child is having significant difficulty, please talk to their doctor. SAFETY FIRST!

Heidi Wilhelm PT, DPT

- Avoid "W" sitting (with both feet behind them) and limit time sitting on heels.
- Make sure the kids have enough to eat and drink (especially water).
- **Clothes make a difference!!** The better they fit, the better they can move. Well-fitting sneakers are recommended.
- Avoid very heavy bags and DO wear backpacks on both shoulders.
- **Encourage good posture** by having them sit up straight and avoid leaning on arms when eating, reading or watching TV. Support the computer/phone/tablet etc. on table/lap desk so it's not down on their lap. Use pillows to support their back as the furniture is usually too big. Use foot stools or small boxes to put their feet on, especially when eating or writing. Avoid leaning to one side all of the time, or lying on the same side. Avoid leaning on the sink as they brush their teeth.
- Most kids crave movements and that is very important for development. Let the child practice climbing/playing on a variety of child safe structures/playgrounds/woods. They may have trouble ending this "fun movement time" so make the end point clear to them and try to end on a good note. Deep breathing/firm slow hugs/rocking/very light touch can help calm them back down if their body gets out of control. Talk about how it feels good to their body even if it was hard and try to make a plan for the next time that they can look forward to.
- **Take lots of "Body Movement Breaks"** before and while performing "Still Body Tasks". Integrate the body movements into their learning. (They might need more during or right after a growth spurt)
- Practice walking up and down the stairs alternating legs and work up to being able to do this safely with no railing.
- Practice balancing on one leg, then with one foot in front of the other (BOTH SIDES!), then try it on a pillow/folded blanket.
- Play board games/read books, sing songs while on their belly.
- **Practice deep breathing:** Bubbles, pinwheel, etc.
- Use horns/harmonicas/recorders and have "noisy time" that encourages deep breathing (use hearing protection). (Great activity for right after school)



- **Whole body movements everyday:** Jumping Jacks. Wheelbarrow walk and the crab walk. Hopping and skipping. Hop scotch. Jump rope. Hula Hoop. Sack/three legged race. Egg and spoon race. Hide and go Seek. Freeze tag. Yoga. Twister. Ride bikes. Swim. Swing. Dig. Climb. Dance. Stretch. Pretend to be animals and creep on hands and knees. Play limbo with a broom or a blanket that you hold up. Relay race type games where they have to walk backwards on their knees, walk on a line, or roll on the floor to the other end of the room. Team races where they have to put on large clothing and get to the other side of the room. Obstacle courses/forts where they have to go under/over/through and cue them to use each leg/arm. Put pillows IN the tunnel too. Play Hide and Seek games not only with their body, but with toys too where they have to crawl under tables and chairs, can do in the dark with flashlights.
- Active circle games such as The Farmer in the Dell, Ring around the Rosie (Hop/Fly/Crawl/Run/Tip toe/Gallop/walk on heels...around the Rosie), Duck Duck Goose, Hot Potato, Musical Chairs, Hokey Pokey, just bounce a ball to each other.
- Stop and start games such as Simon Says, Red light Green light, What time is it Mr Wolf, Mother may I, Follow the leader, Locomotion, Leap Frog. Jump over rolled up blankets or down from stools on to a pad/yoga mat. (Avoid jumping repeatedly onto hard surfaces and it is recommended to wear well supporting shoes/sneakers to help protect knees).
- Play airplane with chairs/stools/rugs lined up and while in circle sit or tall kneeling lean left/right and “up”/“down”.
- Play hand games while up on their knees or in half kneeling: Cat’s Cradle, Where is Thumbkin, Drum, Paint, “paint” with hands using shaving cream/pudding on window. Painter’s tape on wall to make road for small cars.
- In snow shovel/stomp down paths to play Fox and Geese. Dig medium sized holes that they can climb in/out of, snow angels, roll down snow banks.
- **Lots of rolling:** Roll over pile of pillows/blankets or down a hill and encourage them not to use their arms. Try holding on to a stuffed toy with both arms while rolling. (BOTH SIDES!)
- Use chalk (on porch/sidewalk) to make balance lines, “rivers” they have to jump over, and circles that they have to spin in. (BOTH WAYS!) Use their imaginations...a circle is a “transporter” and can make them into anything...anywhere.

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