



**Have a Ball  
Together!**

**best start  
meilleur départ**  
by/par health **nexus** santé

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## Physical activity for 0-18 month olds

Physical activity is important for all children – even infants who are just starting to develop their movement skills.

For babies aged 0-18 months, physical activity is all about exploration, experiencing simple movements and learning about the world.

### Guidelines

#### Physical Activity Guidelines

- Infants should be physically active several times daily.

#### Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

- Adults should minimize the time infants spend being sedentary (doing very little physical movement) during waking hours. This includes prolonged sitting or being restrained (e.g., stroller, high chair) for more than 1 hour at a time.
- For those under 2 years, screen time (e.g., TV, computer, electronic games) is not recommended.

### Benefits

Physical activity helps babies to be healthy, alert, relaxed and happy. Physical activity also helps your baby:

- Stimulate their senses
- Be easier to soothe
- Have better sleep habits
- Improve their digestion
- Learn new skills and experience new emotions
- Build connections in the brain which help with development
- Set the stage for future movement skills

### Skills to Develop

Here are some physical skills you can help your baby with during the first year:

*0-3 months:* neck control, reaching, grabbing, arm and leg movements

*4-6 months:* rolling over, sitting, pushing with their legs

*7-9 months:* moving forward (crawling or scooting), moving objects between hands, standing

*10-12 months:* cruising (walking while holding onto furniture), playing with balls

*12-18 months:* walking up stairs, pushing and pulling objects while walking forward

*These are general guidelines only. Every baby develops differently.*



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## Tips

To help your baby develop their movement skills, you can:

- Provide lots of opportunities for your baby to be active every day, including inside and outside.
- Limit the amount of time your baby spends in the stroller, car seat or infant carrier.
- Make sure your baby is playing with age-appropriate toys and that play areas are safe for your baby.
- Make sure your baby is wearing proper footwear if walking, climbing or jumping.

## Activity Ideas

Here are some activity examples to get your baby moving:

- Move an object side-to-side to encourage your baby to follow the object by moving their head.
- Gently move and stretch your baby's arms and legs.
- Provide lots of opportunities for tummy time.
- Place a toy in front or to the side of your baby and encourage your baby to reach for it.
- Have your baby kick and splash while closely supervised in the tub.
- Play music and encourage your baby to dance.
- Roll a ball to your baby.
- Blow bubbles and encourage your baby to catch them.
- Set-up cushions for your baby to climb over.
- Hold your baby's hands while they practice walking.

Whether at home, in childcare, at school, or in the in the community, we all have a role in getting kids active. Help set the path to a happy childhood and a lifetime of healthy living!

## References

Active for Life (<http://activeforlife.com/>)

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (<http://csep.ca>)

Kids At Play, Australian Capital Territory Government  
(<http://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/kids-play>)

Nipissing District Developmental Screening ([www.ndds.ca](http://www.ndds.ca))



**For more information, tips and activity ideas, visit [haveaballtogether.ca](http://haveaballtogether.ca)**