

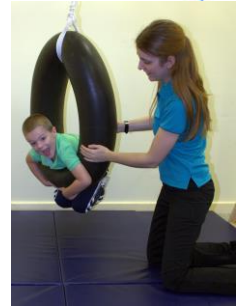
Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



Gross motor skills

Gross motor skills are important as they provide the balance, control and stability needed for the development of fine motor skills which are vital for success at school. They also provide the skills needed to develop ball skills, sporting skills and other skills such as bike riding which are important for social interaction and physical fitness.



Gross motor skills are the ability to move our body, arms and legs and they begin to develop before birth as the baby moves about in the womb. After birth these skills develop into the ability to roll, sit, crawl and walk, then run, jump and balance. These skills develop though out life and are dependent on the opportunities a child experiences to develop and practice these skills with each skill building on the one before and preparing the child for the next challenge.

The following is a rough guide to the typical development of gross motor skills in young children:

At 8 months babies can:

- sit without support
- move from tummy to sitting
- kneel on hands and knees and rock back and forth

At 9 to 11 months babies can:

- begin to crawl
- pull up on furniture to standing
- move from standing to sitting
- sit for extended periods of time

At 12 to 14 months babies can:

- cruise around furniture holding on
- begin to walk independently
- climb into a small chair
- pick up things off the floor
- squat to play with toys
- play with push & pull toy

By 18 months toddlers can:

- climb steps
- creep backwards down stairs
- kick and throw a ball
- sit on a ride a push along toy
- walk and rarely fall
- walk up and down steps holding one hand



At 20 months toddlers can:

- bend over and look between their legs
- climb into an adult chair
- carry toys when walking

By 2 years toddlers can:

- go up and down stairs with railings
- jump on the spot
- jump off a step
- run well
- begin to pedal a tricycle

By two and a half years of age children can:

- stand on one foot
- climb stairs with alternating feet
- walk on tip toes

By three years children can:

- walk and run well
- hop on one foot,
- pedal a tricycle well
- balance on one foot

By four years children can:

- walk on a narrow board
- skip on alternating feet
- balance on one foot for 10 seconds
- catch a large ball

By five years children can:

- move easily between sitting, standing and squatting
- sit upright in a chair
- jump over things
- know left and right

By six years children can:

- hit a ball with a bat
- begin to ride a bicycle
- kick a ball from a running start

At seven a child can:

- catch a small ball with one hand
- throw a ball with accuracy



So how can parents encourage the development of gross motor skills? Skills develop through practice and repetition. Kids are more likely to repeat activities that are fun and where they feel supported, encouraged and successful. Focus on having a go rather than reaching perfection. Offer a variety of fun activities and follow your child's interests. Break trickier tasks down into smaller steps and allow plenty of rest breaks when needed. Remember that children develop at different rates, gently encourage but don't push children to do things if they do not feel ready.

Here are some ideas for developing gross motor skills:

- visit playgrounds for developing climbing, swinging, sliding and jumping
- outdoor play for running, jumping, hopping, skipping
- ball play for throwing, kicking, bouncing, rolling
- skittles or bowling
- throwing at targets, through hoops, into boxes or baskets
- put a ball into a stocking, hang it on the clothes line and hit it with a hand or bat
- outdoor games such as chasey and follow the leader
- pushing, pulling and carrying with wheelbarrows and buckets of water
- bike riding and scooters
- balancing on planks, bricks, tyres, rope or masking tape lines
- go for a walk, run, skip, hop
- explore a local park, walk up a hill and roll down
- play hide and seek
- go to the beach and walk, run, swim and dig
- visit a play cafe
- organised activities such as kinder gym, swimming, dancing and sports
- playing with balloons, kicking, punching in the air, keeping the balloon from touching the ground



Remember to make sure your activities are safe and suitable for your child's age and always supervise your child.

If you are concerned about your child's gross motor skills, an occupational therapist is the person to see for advice. Occupational therapist can assess your child's skills and advise you on what to do to help your child's development. For more information about occupational therapy check the Talking Matters website at talkingmatters.com.au