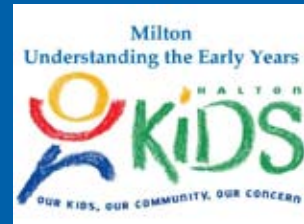


# Physical Health & Wellbeing



**What is it?** Physical health and wellbeing is physical readiness for school (not arriving at school hungry), 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 learn and 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 fresh, fun ideas on strengthening your child's physical health, talk to an early years specialist or try some of the activities listed below.

The activities below are grouped by age:

INFANT

TODDLER

PRESCHOOLER

Give your child 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 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.



Give your infant a stroller ride to the library and borrow *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle or *Travelling Babies* by Kathryn Galbraith. If there is a baby-parent program that day, then stay, play and have fun.

\*This definition is from the Early Development Instrument, which is used to measure the readiness to learn of kindergarten students.





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.



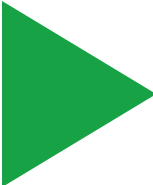

Take short walks together around the neighbourhood. This is a great time to play “I Spy” and “I Hear.”

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



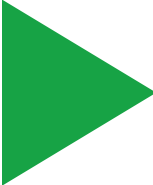

Sing sing, sing! Especially music movement songs, such as *See the Sleeping Bunnies*, *Hokey Pokey*, and *The Chicken Dance*.

Take a trip to the library to read *Monkey and Me* by Emily Gravett, then act it out on the way home. Borrow *Food for Thought* by Saxton Freyman, then together try some of the new fruits and vegetables you see—especially if you can make them into funny looking characters, too.



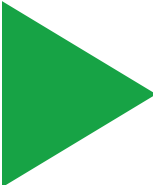

At the grocery store, play the “I spy” shopping game with your child. Let your child place the items in your shopping cart.

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.



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.



Ride or stroll to the library and read *Tanya and Emily in a Dance for Two* by Patricia Gauch, then act it out on the way home. Borrow *When Vegetables Go Bad* by Don Gillmor, then try some new vegetables for dinner.

