



Health and Physical Development

Preschool Age Children

Children's ability to move and play supports learning and success in other areas. Check out these strategies to support your child's health and physical development!

Physical Health and Growth



Expose your child to a wide variety of nutritious foods. Food may need to be offered several times before your child is comfortable with new tastes and textures.

Do not force your child to eat more than they want, and allow them to leave food uneaten. This supports them in recognizing their body's physical cues of fullness.

Brush your child's teeth twice a day with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. As they become more independent, provide assistance and supervision to ensure thorough brushing.

Take your child outside regularly to play during all seasons. Dress them appropriately for the weather (raincoats, sweaters, boots, mittens, coats, hats, and sunscreen).

Children require rest and relaxation; provide a routine that includes both active time and rest during the day.

Help children learn to calm themselves and fall asleep; rubbing their back may help them relax and fall asleep.



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Motor Development

Encourage your child to dress, button, snap, and zip themselves.

Provide activities that help your child increase hand strength, such as using safety scissors and rolling pins with playdough.

Offer materials and activities to encourage large sweeping motions. For example, have your child draw with crayons, paint with finger paints, or use objects like rubber stamps and small-wheeled vehicles.

Encourage your child to take part in active play every day, such as climbing, running, hopping, rhythmic movement, and dance.



Self-Care, Safety, and Well-Being

Encourage children to show independence in self-care practices, such as hand washing and wiping their nose. Provide time, instruction, and equipment as needed.

Teach safety rules and model safe practices. For example: staying with an adult, safely using materials and objects, wearing a bike helmet, and knowing personal identification information.

Give specific praise for remembering safety messages and safe behaviors. Try saying "Thank you for waiting for me" and "Good job of sitting in your chair".



This information was adapted from the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines. To learn more, talk to your childcare provider or visit sdstepahead.com.