



B.C. First Nations Head Start **Get Active!**

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FOR CHILDREN, REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR NORMAL, HEALTHY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, and children's physical activity sets positive patterns which promote health and wellness throughout youth and into adulthood.

Consider just a few of the benefits of regular physical activity:

- May be even more important than milk in bone growth
- Stimulates concentration, heightens memory, and expands problem-solving skills
- Decreases aggressive behaviours
- Enhances academic achievement
- Decreases susceptibility to stress
- Lowers likelihood and levels of smoking and drinking in youth
- Promotes activity and fitness levels in adulthood

Planning Physical Activities

- Provide structured daily physical activity
- Include a variety of activities
- Praise children for participating in an activity—building confidence is more important than skill (“I’m glad that you enjoyed playing that game” instead of “You played that game very well.”)
- Keep children moving without it seeming like “exercise” or something they “have to do.”
- Be a good role model by being physically active yourself!

Some Movement Ideas

Jack in the Box

Show children how to curl up into a tiny ball in an imaginary box, then spring up when the lid is lifted. This can be accompanied by singing. Children find this exciting!

Follow-the-Leader

Young children love to imitate grown-ups! Lead them under, through, off, on, into, up, down and a variety of other actions. Change the rhythm of moving by crawling, walking or jumping.

In and Out

Provide a variety of household items to crawl into, out of, and through—such as a box, a laundry basket, a cupboard, a chair, hoop or playhouse.

Rope

Stretch two ropes along the floor and encourage the child to walk or run between, over or along the ropes. Gradually introduce walking along a balance board or balance beam (if you have one). Look for natural balance beams such as fallen logs, sidewalk curbs, etc.

Size and Shape

Encourage children to learn about “size,” “shape,” and “pathways.” Circle arms in small circles and big circles. Walk on tiptoes with small steps, with large steps. Walk in a straight line, a circle, or a zigzag pattern. Lay masking tape on the floor as a pathway and follow it.

Over and Under

Great activity for a parent-tot group. Children work with a parent. (1) *Adult lies on floor.* Child walks over adult. Reverse roles. (2) *Adult balances on hands and feet,* facing floor. Child crawls under bridge made by adult’s body. Reverse roles! (3) *Adult stands.* Child crawls through adult’s legs. Adult’s turn! (4) *Adult sits on floor with legs apart and straight.* Child jumps over one leg and then the other. Reverse roles. (5) *Adult holds rod or rope at a low height.* Child jumps or hops over. Adult’s turn!

Pathways

Needs lots of space (a spacious room, outdoor concrete area, or a grassy play surface would all work). Create pathways with obstacles such as cones and chairs that children can follow by running, walking or steering a riding toy. Masking tape or rope pathways also provide challenges. Create a pathway in a straight, angular or curved pattern. Encourage children to move, steer a riding toy, or push an object along the pathway.

These activities can be adapted for use inside or outdoors and don’t require any fancy equipment. Reprinted from the *Child and Family Canada* web site: www.cfc-efc.ca.