



sportwaikato

out there and active

KIWITODDLER

START EARLY AND BE ACTIVE FOR LIFE

A simple guide to a beneficial,
suitable and safe movement
programme for one to three year olds



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The Active KiwiToddler

The physical activity needs of young children are very different from adults and older children. Early childhood experiences must allow the developing child to gain physical skills and enjoy moving, as they learn about their body and their environment.

During the first three years a child will learn more than at any other stage. Toddlers play and are active for sheer enjoyment; they are curious and want to explore, experiment and test their abilities. A toddlers play involves active movement and this helps develop and strengthen their body and brain as they grow during the first three years. It is essential our children are able to grow, move and develop.

"To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society".¹

It is important for parents and caregivers to be active with their children, as role models and to enhance their own health and vitality. This provides the foundation for an active life for the whole family, and encourages an appreciation of physical activity, sport and exercise (kōri tinana).

The KiwiToddler™ manual introduces enjoyable play activities and ideas appropriate to the child's development. This allows different skills to be introduced, practiced and acquired involving thinking, moving, communicating, socialising and imitating

¹ Te Whariki He Whariki Mātauranga Mōngā Mōkōpuna o Aotearoa Early Childhood Curriculum.

KiwiToddler:

- Promotes parents and caregivers as the children's first and most important teachers.
- Promotes parents & caregivers roles in developing and reinforcing movement experiences through play.
- Provides parents and children with ideas for play that can be further developed through imaginative and creative thinking.
- Builds on the KiwiBaby™ pathway of being active and learning right from day one. If your toddler missed KiwiBaby he or she can still begin with KiwiToddler. It is never too late to start being active.



Use ideas in this manual with your own imagination and creativity. Make up your own variations, invent your own toys. Share your ideas with others.



If you are unsure about the suitability of a toy for a particular age, give your toddler one which is a little too difficult rather than too simple. Toys that are too easy are quickly discarded. Toddlers enjoy a challenge.



Set aside time each day to organise an activity for your toddler from the appropriate section. You will find more energetic activities at the beginning and quieter play towards the end.

Notes:

- For ease of reading and in order not to show any preference, the use of 'his' and 'her' alternates throughout this manual.
- If you feel that your toddler is not progressing as expected and you are concerned, contact your Plunket Nurse, Public Health Nurse, Well Child Provider or Doctor.

Benefits of the Kiwi Toddler Manual

This manual -

- Encourages you to establish daily movement activities with your toddler.
- Encourages you as parents and caregivers to become your children's first teachers.
- Encourages your toddler's enjoyment of being active (kōri tinana) which will lead to a healthier life.
- Develops body awareness and promotes the development of good patterns of movement.
- Promotes the value of finding playmates for your toddler, so they learn to interact and think about others.
- Encourages communication through talking and listening.
- Stimulates your toddler's curiosity, imagination, and creativity.
- Promotes the value of giving praise and positive reassurance.
- Encourages good loving touch (awhi) in your family/whānau, to strengthen parent/child relationships.
- Promotes the value of you, the parent, being active as a role model for your toddler.
- Provides a range of activities to develop locomotion, stability, manipulation and body awareness. These are the foundation movement skills.
- Provides activities that use all the senses: taste, smell, hearing, visual, as well as touch, vestibular and the proprioceptive sense (body awareness).

Facts About Toddlers

Development, Movement and Play

Development is a continuous process. The sequence of development is generally the same in all children, but the rate of development varies from child to child.

This manual will guide you through the stages of development. Most toddlers will go through each stage, but the age and order will not be the same for all. For example: a toddler needs to learn to walk before learning to run but the age at which toddlers learn to walk and to run varies considerably.

Play helps toddlers to discover, practice and develop new and old skills, to concentrate, to experiment and to use their imagination. It gives them emotional satisfaction and a sense of achievement. Play is the basis of their learning.

Movement is essential for brain development as it is through movement experience that connections are made in the mind/body system.

Development of these connections is necessary for memory, communication between the two sides of the brain, processing information, sensory development, and later, formal learning of language, reading, writing and mathematics.

Play and play materials have educational value, and are part of the basic needs of all toddlers to assist them in their stages of development. Play also keeps them occupied and prevents boredom which rapidly leads to frustration and bad temper. It is necessary to provide toddlers with play activities that are appropriate to their individual stages of development and that interest them, remembering that toys which interest one child will not necessarily interest another.

Social Interaction

Toddlers enjoy playing alongside others of similar ages, although each of them will be involved in separate activities. The first stage in learning about socialising is when they begin to develop an awareness of other people's reactions to them, together with the give and take necessary for group life.

Parallel play gives them the opportunity to discover they are like other children, concerned with the same things, and that they do many things as well as others - perhaps some things better. This develops self-confidence.

Playing alongside others enables toddlers to explore the possibilities of their world and their own potential as individuals.

Nutrition

Toddlers require healthy and regular small snacks because they are very active and growing fast. Eating habits vary enormously from one child to another - some eat very small amounts and others have larger appetites. It is important to provide them with healthy foods with all the nutrients they need, so they begin to learn good eating habits at an early age.

Water

The drinking habits of children are formed early and at home. It is essential to introduce water to children early in their development. Water is the recommended choice for children, rather than fruit drink or soft drinks, which can contribute to weight problems and teeth decay. Encouraging your children to drink milk is also really important as the calcium helps to build strong bones and teeth. Water and milk are the best choices for everyday drinks.

For information about healthy meals and snacks for toddlers and the whole family (whānau) contact your Plunket Nurse, Public Health Nurse, or Community Dietitian.

Language Development

Toddlers learn to communicate by listening and concentrating when someone is talking. Understanding language is far more important at this age than actually speaking it.

It is important to talk to toddlers directly so they can see facial expressions and gestures. The conversation needs to relate to what is happening now (eg eating, dressing, playing), or to what is going to happen: 'We are going to visit Nanny'.

Toddlers need to be listened to when they are trying to communicate, to show them what they have to say is important and interesting. Praise or positive reassurance with all their efforts, no matter how small, encourages them to continue their learning.

Use directional language like 'in' and 'out' when dressing your toddler. To understand the concepts of on, between, under, beside, through, up and down, these words need to be used when the action is done.

Repetition of the action and the word will eventually lead to toddlers grasping the concept (eg 'Put it on the table!') Understanding will come once this action has been done many times and reinforced by positive praise.

Books

Books are invaluable in the development of the language skills of listening, understanding and communicating. Books help toddler's to develop their visual understanding and the ability to notice detail, and stimulate the imagination. An early enjoyment of books provides a foundation for a child's more formal education later on.

Note: Toddlers should not be forced to look at books when they would clearly prefer to be doing something else.

Toddler Behaviour

A child's behaviour during the toddler stage is very confusing because his desire for independence conflicts with his desire for emotional support. He often does not know what he wants and therefore is unable to make decisions easily, so will change his mind several times.

Toddlers will assert their individuality by fighting against control and help, and will insist on doing things for themselves (eg dressing) even though they are unable to do so. On the other hand, toddlers also depend on you totally for emotional support. They will cling to you, cry when you leave the room and hold their arms up to be carried.

Toddlers will at times display selfish behaviour, which is important for defining who they are and to understand their relationship to things and people. They like to play by themselves, and will often play alongside other children with little interaction apart from a tug-of-war over some desired toy. Sharing cannot be rushed, but toddlers need to be given plenty of opportunities to learn to share and to take turns.

Toddlers need to learn for themselves what is appropriate behaviour and therefore need your love and approval to be adventurous and try out new activities in their familiar environment.

Fair Play

It is never too early to teach your child about playing fair. Take the opportunity to encourage respect for other family members; to learn to share toys; to be considerate and to take turns. In other words praise your child for Fair play.

Recognising the effort is important, particularly when young children are still developing skills such as running, jumping and coordination. Success should be based on participation and the individual's success. All children learn at differing rates, and need us as adults to encourage, motivate and praise.

Mentioning the work Fair play as often as possible will help cement the philosophy from this early stage.

Play Materials

Ngā rauemi tākaro

Inexpensive materials have been utilised for nearly all the activities in this manual, most of which you'll find in your home. Some items can be used in several different ways. Toddlers will enjoy natural materials made from wood as much as 'toy store' equipment. Toy libraries are a valuable source of toys at this stage.

Household items to save:

- Empty plastic bottles that have not contained poisonous or harmful substances
- Large bottle caps, egg cartons, plastic containers
- Cardboard boxes of all sizes
- Aluminium foil and foil dishes
- Old magazines, newspapers and junk mail
- Handtowel tubes
- String and wool
- Paper, corks
- Material scraps, cotton reels, wooden pegs

Environmental items to collect:

- Shells, dried leaves, acorns, pinecones etc.

Pages [12](#) to [15](#) include instruction and recipes for play materials that are suggested in some of the KiwiToddler activities.

Note: Māori beliefs sometimes exclude the practice of using food and cooking utensils for play. For each activity where these have been used alternative materials are suggested.

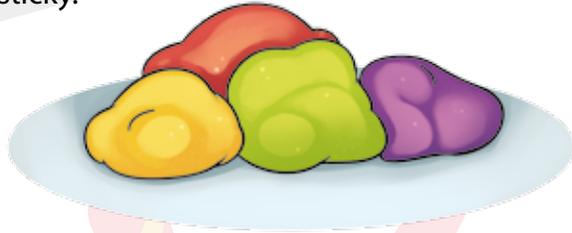
RECIPES

PLAYDOUGH

Store playdough in a sealed plastic container in the fridge. Add some flour if it becomes too sticky.

Playdough 1

1 1/4 cup flour
1/2 cup salt
1/2 cup water



Combine the flour and salt, and slowly mix in the water. Work the mixture into a smooth dough with your fingers.

Playdough 2

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
1 cup water containing food colouring
2 tablespoons of cooking oil

Combine the flour and salt, stir in the water and oil. Work the ingredients with your fingers until you get the consistency of bread dough.

Playdough 3

2 cups flour
2 tablespoons cream of tartar (from the supermarket baking aisle)
2 cups boiling water
1/2 cup salt
2 tablespoons cooking oil

Mix the flour, salt and cream of tartar together, and slowly add the water and oil. Food colouring can be added to the water before mixing.

To make your playdough a bit more interesting or to change the texture add macaroni, glitter, oatmeal or dried beans to it.

NON TOXIC PAINT

Paint 1

Beat together soap flakes (from the laundry aisle at your local supermarket) and water to make a mixture that is the consistency of whipped potatoes. Add food colouring of your choice.

Paint 2

1 cup cornflour

1 litre boiling water

1 cup soap flakes

Food colouring (a few drops)

Dissolve the cornflour in a little cold water. Slowly add the boiling water and boil until thick. Take it off the heat and beat in the soap flakes. Add food colouring to give it a vibrant colour.

Paint 3

1 cup flour

1 cup cold water

1/4 teaspoon dishwashing liquid

3 cups boiling water

Food colouring (a few drops)

Combine the flour and cold water, stirring until it is smooth. Gradually pour the mixture into the boiling water and bring it to the boil, stirring constantly. Add food colouring and let it cool.

Paint 4

1/2 cup soap flakes

Food colouring

large 1/2 cup of water

1/2 cup instant cold water starch

Beat all the ingredients together and add food colouring.

Note: These recipes can be used for finger painting, foot painting or brush painting. Store the paint in airtight containers. Paints made with soap flakes or dishwashing liquid are easier to wash off clothes and surfaces.

BUBBLESOAP

Bubble Mixture 1

Mix together:

7 cups water
3/4 cup clear dishwashing liquid
1/4 cup sugar
Food colouring (optional)

Bubble Mixture 2

Mix together:

1 1/2 cups water
1/2 cup clear dishwashing liquid
1/2 cup (or more) glycerine
(from your pharmacy or supermarket)
2 tablespoons sugar
Food colouring (optional)

Bubble Mixture 3

For frothy bubbles mix liquid detergent and water, or bubblebath and water in a small bowl. Blow bubbles through a straw in the bowl. For coloured bubbles add a few drops food colouring.



Caution: Do not let your toddler swallow the bubblesoap.

NON TOXIC GLUE

Glue 1

Mix flour and water together until you get the consistency you want.

Glue 2

1 cup water

1 heaped teaspoon of flour

Mix the flour to a paste with a little water, then add the rest of the water and boil the mixture for a few minutes. Cool in a covered container.



Markers

- Make your own marker cones by saving your plastic milk bottles and painting them with bright coloured non toxic paint. Put a few stones, some dirt, water or sand in the bottom of the bottles so they don't fall over.
- Other items that can be used instead of marker cones are cereal boxes, bricks, blocks of wood, or large stones. A variety of markers such as books, toys, upside down bowls, etc can be used inside.
- Plastic marker cones can be bought in most toy shops.

Loving Touch (Awhi) Ko te awhi me te mirimiri

Touch is the infants strongest sense and the one he learns the most from.

Instructions

- Massage your toddler whenever you get the opportunity. (pages [142](#) - [149](#))
- Make the most of times when your toddler is looking at books or playing quietly to lovingly stroke (awhi) his hair and shoulders, and massage his feet.

Variations

- Try soothing your toddler with loving cuddles (awhi) and relaxing hair and back rubs when he's upset, angry, or tired.
- Take the opportunity to massage his legs, feet and each tiny toe during nappy changing times. Include rhymes or songs eg 'This Little Pig went to Market...'
- You can massage through light clothing.

Main Benefits

- Soothes and relaxes, whilst helping the brain and sensory system.
- Toning skin and muscles and encouraging relaxation.
- Developing body awareness and enhanced parent/child relationship.
- Learning body part names through touch and association.



Precautions

- Do not expect your toddler to sit still in one place for a period of time, make the most of opportunities to massage as they occur.
- Using oil may be more of a danger than a help now, making him very slippery to handle if active.

Stand & Walk

Te tū me te hīkoi

Instructions

- Teach your toddler to walk sideways and backwards with one or both hands held.
- Stand a distance away and encourage him to walk and then run up to you.
- Provide praise and encouragement at his attempts to walk

Variations

- Teach him to turn around in a circle and walk around obstacles eg a chair.
- Once he has taken his first independent steps, provide him with a large wheeled toy that he can push and pull.
- Encourage him to squat down and pick up a toy off the floor and stand up again with a helping hand.
- Help him to learn to walk up and down stairs, and to walk on different surfaces - concrete, sand, uneven paddocks, etc.
- Teach him to bob up and down. This is a skill needed before he can learn to jump.
- Let him watch children and adults moving, to learn by observation.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination and movement skills.
- Gaining a sense of achievement in discovering new capabilities.
- Practicing judging distance.
- Developing locomotor skills.



Precautions

- Provide an obstacle-free area for him to practice walking and running.
- Ensure his play area is safe to protect him from injury.
- Don't worry if your toddler doesn't want to walk yet. Go back to the walking activity on page 88 of your KiwiBaby manual.

Animal Sounds

Ngā oro kararehe

Instructions

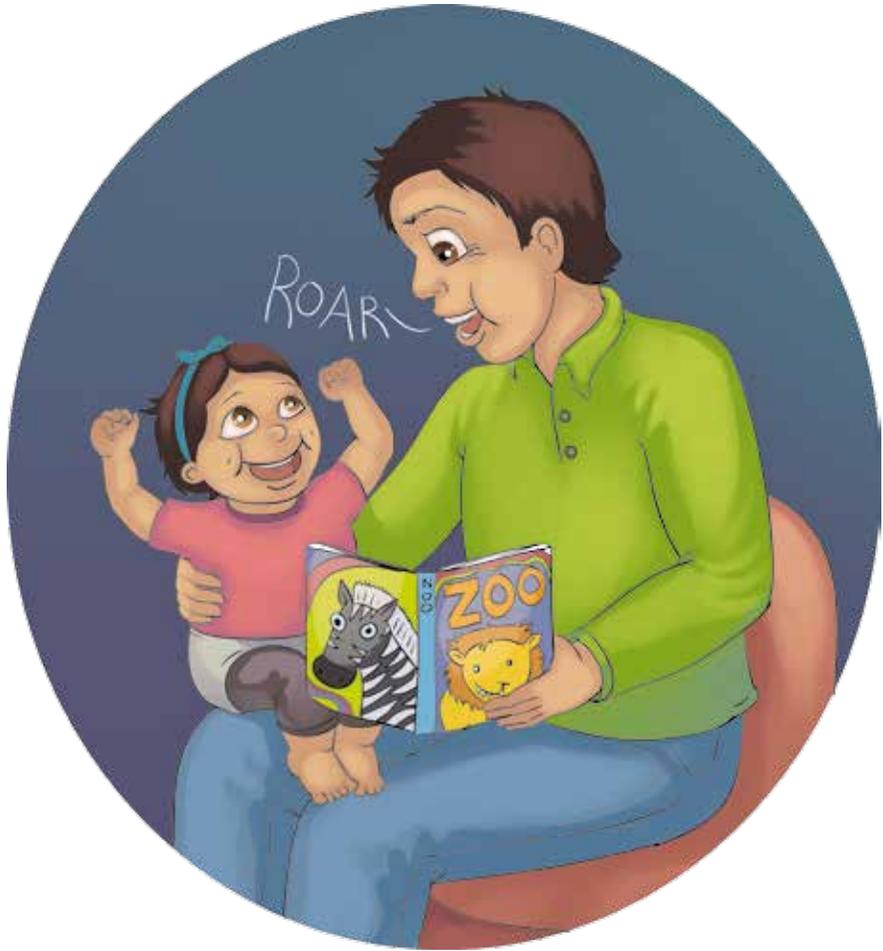
- Obtain a book with large pictures of farm animals from the library, a friend or bookshop.
- Sit together and read the book.
- Point to an animal, name it, and then make the sound the animal makes. Move on to the next animal in the book and repeat.
- Encourage your toddler to imitate your words, sounds and facial expressions.
- Encourage participation and page turning from your toddler.

Variations

- Find different books such as a transport book with trucks, planes and motorbikes, or a book of zoo animals.
- Make your own picture books with a scrap book, using magazine pictures, your own drawings and make up a story.

Main Benefits

- Encouraging relaxation and using visual stimulus to learn about movement.
- Developing eye focus at close range.
- Developing vocabulary and learning about animals.
- Encouraging an enjoyment of books.



! Precautions

- Toddlers experiment with the feel and sound of tearing paper, so keep delicate books out of reach and provide him with a variety of books with cardboard or fabric pages for him to help himself to.

Follow The Ball Whaiwhai pōro

Instructions

- Roll a light-weight ball across the grass and encourage your toddler to retrieve it and bring it to you.
- Roll the ball in different directions each time and encourage her to follow.
- Repeat until either of you gets tired.

Variations

- Vary the size of the ball. A ball soft to the touch, or with texture is best.
- Roll the ball at different speeds for her to chase.
- Teach her to roll or throw the ball back to you.
- Include other children in the game so she can watch how they handle the ball.
- Give her the opportunity to watch a dog playing with a ball.
- Adapt this game for inside play.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills, balance, flexibility, and hand/eye coordination.
- Learning to follow objects with her eyes.
- Developing eye tracking skills.
- Exploring space and movement of objects.
- Developing socialising and interaction skills.



Precautions

- Ensure the play area is fenced so that your toddler cannot chase the ball onto the road.

Music Fun

Mahi waiata

Instructions

- Turn on some music and sing along.
- Hold onto your toddler's hands and dance around.
- Clap to the music and encourage him to copy you.
- Pick him up and rock him to the beat of the music.
- Play nursery rhymes to him.

Variations

- Hum, whistle or sing your own songs.
- Tell simple nursery rhymes and clap your hands or stamp your foot to the rhythm, for example:

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can.
Pat it, prick it and mark it with B;
Put it in the oven for baby and me.

- Anei aku whatu hei pūkanakana (Tune to 'Three little
Anei taku ihu hei hongī hia ducks ducks went out one
Anei aku ngutu hei kihikihi day')
Ko aku ringaringa awhi mai

These are my eyes for looking with
This is my nose to smell you with
These are my lips to kiss you with
These are my arms, give me a hug!

- Give him the opportunity to make his own 'music' during play such as banging a wooden spoon on a saucepan, or tapping a pencil on a box.



Main Benefits

- Achieving balance, flexibility and coordination.
- Developing a sense of rhythm.
- Learning by observing.
- Imitating and experimenting with sounds.
- Learning new words.
- Develops timing, patterning and sequence skills through repetition.

Precautions

- Your toddler will enjoy making spontaneous music by experimenting with sounds which he will repeat again and again.
- Be patient. This is how he will learn to make the sounds for talking.

Follow Me

Whai mai i ahau

Instructions

- Tie a piece of wool through a small box or container for your toddler to pull, or purchase or hire a pull-along-toy.
- Encourage her to pull it along the floor on the carpet, lino, concrete, grass, dirt and other surfaces.
- Drop it over the side of a chair, or into a box and give her the end of the wool to pull it back up with.

Variations

- As she watches, hide it under a pillow, inside a container, or in a drawer, with the end of the wool visible so she can pull it out.
- Tie the wool around other objects such as an egg carton, an empty plastic bottle, a rattle, a plastic kitchen utensil, or something that she is particularly interested in at the moment.
- Tie the wool around something that floats for her to pull around in the bath or in a bowl of water.

Main Benefits

- Using the fine motor muscles in the hands and fingers.
- Developing grasp and hand/eye coordination.
- Exercising her whole body.
- Experimenting with weight, gravity, sound and friction.
- Learning new words.
- Encouraging problem solving.



Precautions

- The length of the wool should be measured from her hip to the floor or shorter. If it is too long she may become frustrated with it.
- Supervise all play with wool because there is a risk that she may wind it around her neck.

Meal Time

Te wā kai

Instructions

- Provide an extra teaspoon at meal time for your toddler to learn to hold and attempt to feed himself.
- Place the spoon in the middle to allow your toddler to choose which hand to use.
- Put food on his spoon and encourage him to take it to his mouth.
- Praise his efforts each time he tries, even when he misses his mouth.

Variations

- Provide him with a cup to drink from and plenty of assistance. Encourage him to use both hands.
- Provide finger foods such as little sandwiches or crackers and allow him to feed himself.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand/eye and hand/mouth coordination.
- Learning fine movement skills.
- Learning by thinking and experimenting.
- Learning new words and asserting independence.

Precautions



- It will take a lot of practice to master the art of feeding himself, and a lot of patience and support from you.
- To avoid mess from spillages, cover the floor under the highchair with newspaper or plastic.
- Avoid giving him raisins and peanuts as he may choke on them.



Falling Objects

Te hinga o ngā taputapu

Instructions

- Sit your toddler on a box or tree stump so she can see the ground.
- Drop some leaves in front of her so she can watch them fall to the ground.
- Now give her the leaves and let her drop them with either hand. Repeat several times.
- Provide a variety of objects that will fall in different ways such as a ball, hat, sock, plastic bottle, soft toy, ribbon, balloon.
- Give your toddler the chance to hold and drop the objects with both left and right hands.

Variations

- Fill a bowl with water, or visit a lake, pond or the beach and drop stones, sand, leaves, driftwood and bread for the birds into the water.
- Your toddler will also enjoy dropping objects from her highchair or cot onto the floor.
- Use words like drop, up, down, sink and float with this activity.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand/eye coordination.
- Learning how to grasp objects.
- Learning how to let go.
- Developing eye tracking skills.
- Discovering the concept of weight, gravity and movement of different objects when dropped.
- Learning new words.



Precautions

- Ensure she's only dropping objects that you want her to drop.

Make It Fit

Kia tika te whakauru

Instructions

- Make or buy a set of nesting toys; approximately six items of graduated sizes so that each fits inside another.
- Show your toddler how they all fit together and then let him tip them all out and attempt to imitate you.
- Repeat this again and again until he tires of the game.
- Use the words in, out, on, through, big, little, and small when playing this game.

Variations

- Find some containers with lids that your toddler can take off and put on, and objects that he can put inside the containers.
- Postbox toys have different shaped holes and shapes to fit in the hole. You can make your own by cutting out shapes in the lid of an ice-cream container to post the objects such as a small ball, an empty raisin packet, a clothes peg, etc.
- Cut holes in a large box with three or four different sized holes that he can choose to drop his toys through.
- Cut out a hole in the top of an ice cream container. Tie light scarves together and put in the box. Encourage him to pull these out with each hand.

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Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills, hand/eye coordination and encouraging relaxation.
- Developing fine motor skills and problem solving.
- Developing memory skills.
- Experimenting with size and shape.
- Learning about patience and perseverance, and learning new words.
- Problem solving to make it fit.
- Matching and sorting practice.

Precautions



- Some toddlers prefer to be climbing, running and exploring rather than sitting, so don't be disappointed if he's not interested in this game for long - try again at a later stage.

Drawing

Te mahi tuhituhi

Instructions

- Provide your toddler with large pieces of paper and two or three large, thick crayons to experiment with.
- Draw some simple lines and circles with her watching.
- Allow her to scribble and jab with the crayon in her own style, holding the crayon in whichever hand she chooses.
- Talk about the colours and shapes with her.

Variations

- Blackboard and thick chalk.
- Whiteboard and erasable marker.
- Finger paints (see [Recipes page 13](#)).
- Provide plenty of paper such as cardboard, wallpaper, newspaper and brown paper bags split open and laid flat.
- Chalk and concrete.

Main Benefits

- Developing grasp, hand/eye coordination, and encouraging relaxation.
- Developing fine motor skills.
- Discovering new capabilities, new words and colours.
- Learning by example.



Precautions

- Ensure the crayon and chalk are not small enough to choke on.
- Allow her to alternate between using her left and right hands, and to hold the crayons and chalk whichever way she chooses.

Let's Build Te hanga taputapu

Instructions

- Provide your toddler with a set a blocks to play with (these can be homemade using wood or cardboard boxes).
- Build a tower with the blocks, let him knock them down, then rebuild them for him again and again.
- Then encourage him to build up the blocks himself.
- Use the words up, down, over, on, high and low.

Variations

- Try different objects for building with; such as empty cereal boxes and egg cartons, or plastic boxes from the kitchen cupboard.
- Stack cushions and pillows on top of each other.
- Small wooden offcuts can be stacked up outside and knocked over again.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills, grasp and hand/eye coordination.
- Experimenting with movement and balance.
- Discovering the concept of size, shape, weight and gravity.
- Encouraging him to think and learn new words.
- Learning colours.
- Problem solving.



Precautions

- Your toddler may only be able to build up a tower of three blocks by the time he reaches 18 months - but he will really enjoy knocking down whatever you build.
- Ensure wooden blocks are untreated, the edges are sanded and, if painted, use non toxic paint.

Hide & Seek

Te huna me rapu

Instructions

- Hide a toy under a cushion while your toddler watches, and then encourage her to find the toy. Repeat this several times.
- Hide different toys and objects under the cushion.
- Now encourage her to hide things under the cushion for you to find.
- Provide her with praise when she finds the toy.
- Use the word under during this activity.

Variations

- Try different hiding places such as in one of your hands, in a box, under an upturned bowl, in a drawer, behind your back, or in your pocket.
- Hide larger objects outside such as a large ball under a tree, behind a wall, or in a box.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand/eye coordination and movement skills.
- Encouraging her to think and develop memory skills.
- Learning by example.
- Developing vocabulary.



Precautions

- Start this game very simply by letting your toddler see where you hide the object and keep using that hiding place until she begins to understand the game.
- She will become frustrated if you extend this game for too long when she wants to play with the object you're hiding.

Empty & Fill

Tango me te whakaki

Instructions

- Fill an old carry bag with all sorts of objects from your cupboards such as a wooden spoon, plastic egg cup, an old toothbrush, pegs, lids, a comb, and some toys your toddler hasn't seen for a while.
- Allow him to spend time unpacking the items one by one, putting them all back in again and then tipping them out again.
- He will enjoy carrying his shopping bag around with him too.
- Use the words in, out, full and empty frequently during this activity.

Variations

- Re-organise a kitchen cupboard with pots and pans and plastic containers for him to empty out and put away.
- He will enjoy filling a wheelbarrow or box outside with toys, wood, garden utensils, leaves, etc. and then empty it again.
- Provide an old washing basket or box to use as a toy box to delve into whenever he chooses.

Main Benefits

- Developing grasp and hand/eye coordination.
- Exercising hands, arms and shoulders.
- Exploring the properties and shapes of objects.
- Developing curiosity and encouraging him to think.
- Learning new words.



! Precautions

- Ensure the toys and objects will not cut, choke or cause other injuries to your toddler.
- Do not give him plastic bags.
- Install safety catches on doors and cupboards containing articles that could endanger him.

Sand Play

Korikori ki te onepū

Instructions

- Take your toddler to the beach to play.
- Let her play with the sand; feeling, sifting, throwing and even tasting.
- Find some shells to bury and sticks to dig with.
- Show her how to use a bucket and spade.
- Build sandcastles with her (page 66).
- Give her the opportunity to watch other children and adults playing on the beach.
- Feed the seagulls.
- Use the words soft, rough, in, out, warm, wet , cold.

Variations

- If it's warm enough take her down to the water to paddle, squeeze sand between her toes, and sit in a shallow rock pool.
- Build a sand pit in the backyard to play in and invite other children to play in it with her. A tractor tyre filled with sand makes an easy and portable sandpit.
- Set aside a dirt patch in the corner of the garden for her to play in if you don't have a sand pit.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills, hand/eye coordination and encouraging relaxation.
- Exercising many different muscles.
- Learning about textures, size and weight.
- Developing curiosity, imagination and vocabulary.



Precautions

- Always keep the sand pit or dirt patch covered when not in use to keep dogs and cats out.
- Supervise closely when near water.
- Put on sunblock and a hat to avoid sunburn, and a woollen hat on cold windy days.

Let's Exercise

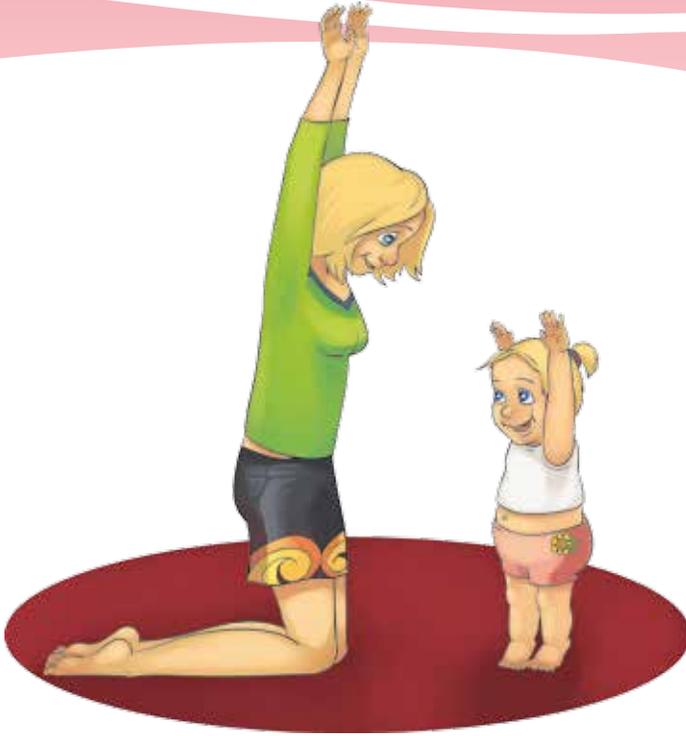
Korikori tinana

Instructions

- Do gentle movements with your toddler.
- **Arms:** Lift them up above his head. Cross them over his chest. Raise one arm above the head and lie the other by his side, then change arms.
- **Tummy:** Lying on his back, hold each hand in yours and pull him halfway to sitting up. He will then have to bend his elbows to pull himself up to the sitting position. Repeat this.
- **Legs:** Lying on his back with knees bent, place your hands flat on the soles of his feet and let him push against your hands with some resistance. Hold his ankles and rotate his legs gently like riding a bicycle, and then change direction.
- Use the words up, down, around, in and out while doing the movements. Talk about the body parts involved.

Variations

- *Wheelbarrows:* When he's in a crawling position, lift his legs off the floor a few times so that he's balancing on his arms. Then push him slowly in different directions encouraging him to walk on his hands.
- *Tug of War:* With him standing facing you, wrap a towel around his back and buttocks, and hold each end of the towel - encourage him to pull backwards away from you.
- Have him watch you exercise every day (eg house work, exercising, walking).



Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills and exercising many different muscles.
- Using the names of body parts.
- Learning through observation and interaction, and using effort.

Precautions

- Be gentle with the movements, ensure his limbs are relaxed before you attempt to move them in any direction, if not, leave these exercises and play something else.
- Try them again another time.

Let's Climb

Piki me te heke taputapu

Instructions

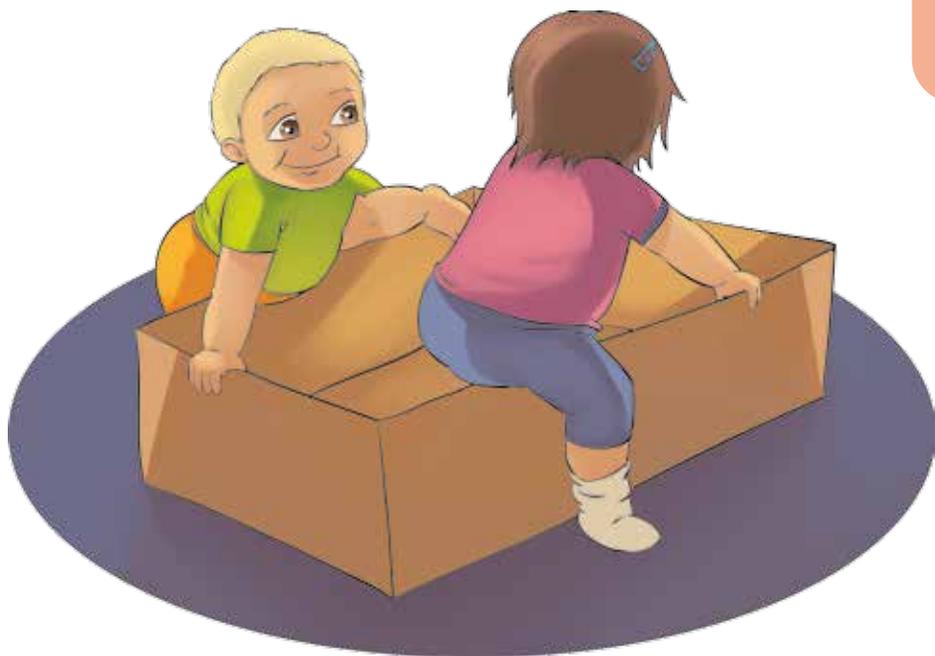
- Provide your toddler with a large cardboard box or washing basket to climb in and out of.
- Teach her how to hold on to the sides, lift one leg over the side and then the other.
- Use the words up, down, in and out for this activity.

Variations

- Teach her to climb over a low wall, or an old tyre.
- Help her to climb up on to a couch or a bed and show her how to get back down again.
- Let her climb up and over you.
- Children's playgrounds and parks provide low obstacles for climbing into and over and she can watch how other children climb.
- Ride-on toys are great for climbing on and off.
- Teach her to climb steps and come down again.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, flexibility and coordination.
- Exercising arms, legs, stomach and back muscles.
- Developing body awareness.
- Exploring new activities and capabilities.
- Starting to understand height and gravity.
- Developing spatial awareness and learning directional language.



Precautions

- If your toddler is likely to fall, ensure she will land on carpet or something soft.
- Supervise all climbing activities - she will want to climb everything and has no sense of danger. Teach her to climb up and down correctly.

Peek-A-Boo

Whakatātare

Instructions

- Hide behind a door or a piece of furniture and call your toddler's name until he finds you and then 'Boo'!
- Move to another hiding place with him following close behind and then 'Boo'!
- Continue to find different places to hide.
- Let him hide and say 'Boo'!

Variations

- Try the same activities outside in the garden, the park or a playground.
- Pretend to be animal hiding eg a cat so that when he finds you 'meow'.
- Hide under a box or a blanket for him to find you.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance and movement skills.
- Learning to react and move quickly.
- Exploring space and the size of objects.
- Encouraging thinking and memory skills, learning new words.



Precautions

- Make sure your toddler has some idea of where you are all the time. Do this by calling him and allowing him to see where you're hiding. This ensures he doesn't get a fright and lose confidence.
- Ensure the play area is safe, to prevent injury.

Tumble In The Leaves

Te takahurihuri i ngā rau o te rākau

12-18 MONTHS

Instructions

- Gather up a large pile of autumn leaves.
- Play together in the leaves with your toddler and other members of the family.
- Roll in them, throw them up in the air, catch them, hide under them.

Variations

- Play together inside or outside without the leaves; rolling and tumbling on the floor, tickling and hugging.
- Put on old clothes and tumble in freshly mown grass clippings.
- Roll down small slopes together.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills, flexibility and coordination.
- Using most of her large muscle groups.
- Learning by example and exploring new capabilities.
- Social interaction and learning new words.
- Interacting in the natural environment



Precautions

- Ensure older children are not too boisterous.
- The play area needs to be free of dangerous obstacles.

Water Fun

Te kori ki roto i te wai kaukau

Instructions

- Supervise this activity at all times.
- Fill a warm bath and place a non-slip mat in the bottom for your toddler to play in.
- Give him things that float and some that sink, containers to pour with, and kitchen utensils to experiment with.
- Encourage him to kick and splash, and help him to float on his tummy and his back.
- Pour water down the back of his head, neck and shoulders, trickling a little over his face if he doesn't mind.

Variations

- Make it a bubble bath, or add some food colouring to the water.
- Fill a paddling pool outside, or provide a bucket or bowl of water to play with.
- If you don't have a bath try filling a large bowl of water in the shower box.

Main Benefits

- Floating, kicking, splashing, and pouring with resistance from the water.
- Good exercise for the whole body.
- Gaining water confidence: the first stage of learning to swim.
- Learning new words.



Precautions



- **Never leave your toddler alone with water** because he can drown in a very small amount in a very short time.
- Protect him from hot water and the hot tap to prevent burns.
- Don't persist with any water activity he dislikes. It may cause him to lose confidence.

Balloons

Te poi hau

Instructions

- Blow up two or three brightly coloured balloons and tie a length of string around the end of each one.
- Suspend them in a doorway or where your toddler can reach them.
- Hit the balloons up in the air for her to watch and then encourage her to join in and copy you.

Variations

- Teach her to hit the balloons with her head.
- Hang the balloons outside on the washing line so that she can watch and hit them as they blow in the wind.
- Try hanging several different objects at varying heights such as stuffed animals or foam rubber balls.
- Give her a paper towel tube to bat the objects with.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, upper body coordination, hand/eye coordination and flexibility.
- Exercising many different muscles.
- Practicing eye-tracking.
- Having fun and learning new words.
- Experimenting with weight and gravity.



Precautions

- Supervise your toddler when playing with string as there is a risk she could become tangled in it.
- If a balloon bursts, collect up all the pieces so your toddler doesn't choke on one.
- Ensure the outside play area is well fenced, so that if a balloon blows away your toddler won't come to any harm chasing it.

Cuddle Fun

Te awhiawhi

Instructions

- Continue to provide plenty of loving touch (awhi) and massage daily.
- When playing tag or hide and seek with your toddler, catch him, give him a big cuddle (awhi) and then let him run away again.
- Repeat this several times.
- Then change places and let him catch and cuddle you.

Variations

- Roll and tumble on the floor together, and take him for rides on your back.
- When changing him, or at bathtime, blow raspberries on his tummy, back, arms, legs and feet. Laugh and giggle together.
- Establish a ritual of giving all members of the family a kiss and a hug before going to bed. Your toddler may like to extend this to his stuffed toys and dolls.

Main Benefits

- Combining loving touch with active play.
- Learning by example and feeling good together.



Precautions

- Allow him to break contact when he wants to.
- Your toddler may become very excited during this game, so give him time to wind down afterwards with a quiet game or book.



Go For A Ride

Te haerere haere mā runga pouaka

Instructions

- Find a cardboard box for your toddler to push around the floor.
- Put some toys or stuffed animals in the box and encourage her to take them for a ride in it.
- Add a few more items to the box to make it a little heavier, so that she uses more force to push it.
- Use in, out, around, on, up, down, forward and backwards to describe her actions.

Variations

- Substitute the box for a trolley with wheels, dolls pram or pushchair for outside play.
- Tie some string to the box so that she can try pulling it around instead of pushing it.
- Use an old sheet or blanket to put things on and take them for a 'sledge' ride.

Main Benefits

- Strengthening and developing muscles, balance, flexibility and coordination.
- Experimenting with weight and movement, and encouraging her to think.
- Developing the proprioceptive sense and body awareness.



Precautions

- She will want to discover her own limitations – so allow her to experiment independently.

Follow The Leader

Whaiwhai kaiārahi

18 MTH - 2 YRS

Instructions

Set up daily exercise (kori tinana) routine for yourself and encourage your toddler to watch and join in with you. For example:

- Marching and clapping.
- Stretching your muscles after the warm up.
- Running on the spot.
- Star jumps with arm movements.
- Side bends, reaching your arms as high as possible while keeping your knees bent.

Variations

- Go for a walk.
- Try the activity session shown on television.
- Join a movement class that you can take him to.
- Be active with a friend.
- Initiate a daily activity programme for the whole family.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills, flexibility and coordination.
- Exercising many different muscles.
- Learning by observation and developing daily activity habits.



Precautions

- Don't push your toddler to do any particular exercise. Allow him to try to imitate you in his own way.

Wash The Car

Horoi motokā

Instructions

- Provide your toddler with a bowl or bucket of soapy water and a sponge and encourage her to help you wash the car.
- Allow her to experiment with washing other items such as her tricycle, toys, dolls, the fence and clothes.
- She may even choose to climb into the bucket and wash herself.

Variations

- Encourage her to help you with household tasks such as washing windows and floors.
- Let her stand on a chair or stool at the kitchen sink and wash plastic dishes and safe kitchen utensils, and wipe down the bench.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand/eye coordination, hand skills, balance and flexibility.
- Learning by imitating, and being able to 'help' you gives her feelings of self worth.
- Learning new words.



Precautions

- Supervise all water play. Children can drown in a minimum amount of water in a very short time.



Little Helper

Taku kaiāwhina

Instructions

- Encourage your toddler to be your 'little helper'.
- Ask him to fetch and carry things for you such as carrying the pegs out to the washing line and passing them to you one by one.
- Ask him to go to his room and get items for you like a nappy, his slippers, his boots, his hat.
- He can put his dirty clothes in the washing basket and carry his plate out to the kitchen after meals.
- Provide your toddler with lots of praise for achieving any task.

Variations

- Let him try bringing two or more items at once, or slightly heavier, or more awkward items.
- Encourage him to help you to pick up and put away all his play things.

Main Benefits

- Practicing walking, balance, flexibility and coordination.
- Developing a sense of achievement, learning by observation and word association.
- Establishing routines.
- Developing memory skills.
- Following Instructions



Precautions

- Be patient. Sometimes having your toddler 'help you' means that it take twice as long to get things done.



Finger Painting

Tā pikitia mā ngā matimati

Instructions

- This is a great tactile experience.
- Give your toddler the opportunity to finger paint (see [Recipes page 13](#)).
- Cover the table or floor with some newspaper, so she doesn't make a mess, then pour some finger paint onto a piece of wax paper or plastic.
- Show her how the paint can be swirled and moved around, using thumbs, fingers, hands and finger nails.
- Give her the opportunity to experiment with it.

Variations

- Provide her with two or three different colours to mix and swirl together.
- Many different household substances can be used for finger painting.
- For outside play, mud makes very good finger paint.
- Encourage her to touch things with different textures such as the bark on trees, gravel, animal fur, painted surfaces, crushed ice etc.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills and hand/eye co ordination.
- Experiencing various touch sensations.
- Developing the small muscles in the hands and fingers.
- Encouraging creativity and imagination, and time for relaxation.



! Precautions

- Your toddler still enjoys tasting everything she touches, so be sure not to give her toxic substances to paint with.

Blowing Ngā kēmu pūpuhi

Instructions

- Tie a fine ribbon to the end of a stick or straw.
- Teach your toddler how to blow it to make it move.
- Blow the ribbon in his direction so that it flutters in his face.
- Give your toddler bubblesoap to blow ([page 14](#)).

Variations

- Collect a handful of dry leaves or petals and blow them, or watch the wind blowing them.
- Pick a blade of grass, flower, or dandelion clock to blow.
- Blow out candles.
- Float a cork on water to blow around.
- Show him how to put his mouth in the water with it closed and blow bubbles.

Main Benefits

- Learning to control the muscles around the mouth (used for making sounds).
- Learning to control his breathing and exercise his lungs.
- Learning about airflow and its effect on different objects.
- Learning by observing and experimenting.



Precautions

- It takes time to learn how to do this. Give plenty of praise for trying.
- Supervise water play. It takes very little time and water for a child to drown.
- Avoid drinking bubblesoap.

Sand Castles

Te hanga whare onepū

Instructions

- Take a bucket and a spade on your next visit to the beach.
- Show your toddler how to make sand castles.
- Collect shells and driftwood to decorate the sand castles.

Variations

- Dig a hole, put your feet in the hole and then let her shovel the sand back in to cover your feet. Then bury her feet.
- Provide items of different sizes and shapes to dig, fill, pour, sift, shovel and tip with.
- Provide opportunities to play in a sand pit or dirt patch in the garden.
- Leaves, flowers, sticks, pine cones and other items can make play more interesting.
- She'll enjoy knocking the sand castles down each time you build them.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills, hand/eye coordination, movement and flexibility.
- Learning about size, shape, quantity, and weight.
- Developing curiosity, imagination and vocabulary.
- Using the sense of touch with different materials.



Precautions

- Cover the sand pit or dirt patch when not in use to keep dogs and cats out.
- Put on sunblock, and a hat to prevent sunburn, and woollen hats on cold, windy days.

Play Ball

Korikori pōro

Instructions

- Find a small light-weight ball that your toddler can easily hold in one hand.
- Put a large box or washing basket in front of him and show him how to throw the ball overhand forwards into the box.
- Let him practice doing this, praising him on every throw, whether it goes into the box or not.

Variations

- Provide a pile of small balls that your toddler can hold in one hand. You could use rolled up tinfoil, rolled up newspaper, a pair of socks or sponges.
- Encourage him to throw with left hand, right hand, overarm and underarm.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, upper body coordination, flexibility and movement skills.
- Practicing eye tracking.
- Learning ball handling skills by observing others.
- Having fun and learning new words.



Precautions

- Teach your toddler what he is and isn't allowed to throw, especially when playing inside.

Hockey

Te mahi hōki

Instructions

- Show your toddler how to hit a large light-weight ball around the garden using a paper towel tube, or rolled up newspaper.
- Then let her try to do it.
- Give her plenty of praise with every attempt.
- After a while find another light-weight bat and hit the ball to her, and then encourage her to hit or push it back to you.

Variations

- Use a balloon, a dry bath sponge or some rolled up socks to replace the ball. The bat can be any kitchen utensil - like a wooden spoon, or a table tennis bat, or a plastic spade.
- Play this game in the bath or paddling pool with something that floats on the water.
- Take your toddler to watch a hockey game.

Main Benefits

- Developing upper body coordination, balance, movement skills and flexibility.
- Developing hand/eye coordination.
- Practice tracking a moving object.
- Learning through observation and exploring new capabilities.
- Learning new words.



Precautions

- Avoid competing with her or asking for too much to be achieved.
- Supervise water play. Toddlers can drown very quickly in a minimal amount of water.

Playdough Fun

Te Kori Kerepeti

Instructions

- Clear a space on the bench or table, or put some newspaper or a sheet of plastic on the floor for your toddler to use for his playdough. (See [Playdough recipes page 12](#)).
- Allow him to squeeze, poke, prod, roll, squash and manipulate his playdough.
- Provide some containers to put the playdough in, holes to push it through, and blunt instruments to cut it with.
- Give him some things to decorate the playdough with; different shaped pastas, beads, shells, pegs and buttons.
- Try drying some of the things he makes in the sun.
- Use language like roll, pat, poke, prod, squish, squeeze, flatten and other shape words.

Variations

- Playdough can be enjoyed outside: sticking it on fences, walls, and blocks of wood. Decorate it with stones, leaves, sticks and flowers.
- He will want to experiment with the dough to see what it will do, like trying to bounce or roll it like a ball.
- Clay may be dug from some gardens or banks, and mixed with water to use instead of playdough, or you can buy plasticine.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand/eye coordination, and hand skills.
- Encouraging relaxation.
- Developing the small muscles in the hands and fingers.
- Using the tactile sense.
- Experimenting with texture and shapes and developing creativity and imagination.
- Developing language through association with the action.



Precautions

- When buying playdough ensure it is non toxic.
- Supervise well if you provide small objects to be used as decorations.

Music Fun

Mahi waiata

Instructions

- Sing the alphabet and march around the room together clapping or waving to the beat.
- Use homemade instruments to make sounds to the rhythm of your song, such as a plastic container with blocks inside to shake, or a spoon and box for a drum.
- If you play a musical instrument, play the alphabet tune and sing along or stamp your foot to the beat.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G,
H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P
Q, R, S,
T, U, V

W, X, Y, and Z.

Now I know my ABC's
Next time won't you sing with me?

Variations

- Make up your own songs and rhythms.
- March, dance, sing and play instruments together with music on the radio. Anything that makes a noise can be considered a musical instrument.
- Provide her with plenty of opportunities to watch other people doing different types of dancing.
- Purchase or borrow from the library a CD with nursery rhymes on it.



Main Benefits

- Improving balance, flexibility, movement skills and coordination.
- Developing a sense of rhythm, and learning through observation and word association.
- Developing memory through repetition.



Precautions

- Allow her to experiment with movement to music with plenty of praise - laughing at her may cause her to lose confidence.

Bubble Fun

Te korikori ki te mirumiru

Instructions

- Make up some bubble soap in a bowl or purchase from a toy store (see [page 14](#) for recipes).
- Make a loop with a pipe cleaner or wire coat hanger, or find a toy or utensil with a hole in that will make a good bubble blower.
- Blow your bubbles and let them float around the room for your toddler to chase, poke, clap or stomp.

Variations

- Have other children join in blowing and chasing the bubbles.
- Play this outside and watch the bubbles blow around in the breeze.
- Make paper planes and fly them around the room for him to chase and catch.

Main Benefits

- Using the fine muscles around the mouth, used for speaking.
- Developing balance, hand/eye coordination, movement skills and flexibility.
- Exercising many different muscles.
- Developing eye tracking.
- Having fun, experimenting and learning by observation and word association.



Precautions

- Checking the ingredients of the bubble soap if you're buying it to avoid the risk of poisoning.
- Cleaning up spillages so that no one slips over in the soap.
- Avoid drinking the bubble soap.

Farm Animals

Ngā kararehe o te pāmu

18 MTH - 2 YRS

Instructions

- Take your toddler to visit a farm.
- Show him each of the farm animals that he's learnt about in his books and from pictures, and count them.
- Give him time to sit and watch what each animal does - how it eats, sleeps, breathes, communicates, walks and runs.
- Show him how to imitate animal movements and sounds.
- If possible let him feed and touch the animal.
- Teach him to sit quietly and allow animals to come to him.

Variations

- Visit a lake with ducks, geese, swans and birds, and let him feed them some bread.
- Visit a pet shop and wander around quietly together looking at the animals, naming them, talking about them, and counting how many there are.
- Visit friends who have pets, or get a pet of your own, and teach your toddler how to respect and care for them.
- Visit a zoo, an animal park or an aquarium.

Main Benefits

- Observing movement and behaviour, and learning new words.
- Developing curiosity.
- Experiencing firsthand in the natural environment.



Precautions

- Try to avoid frightening experiences with animals that may cause him to lose his confidence.

Run, Run! Ngā mahi omaoma

Instructions

- Make sure there is a clear space for this activity.
- Run with your toddler from one side of the room to the other and then back again.
- Have other children join in and encourage them to run back and forth.
- Clap and give praise each time they reach the wall.

Variations

- Put an obstacle in the middle of the room such as a tunnel made with a blanket, or a cushion to climb over so that they stop, tackle the obstacle, and then run to the end.
- Find open spaces to run in: the backyard, a park, a farm, the beach.
- Have races and let her win most of the time.
- Take her to watch athletics at the park.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, movement skills, flexibility and coordination.
- Developing body awareness.
- Learning to observe, interact with and think about others.



! Precautions

- Ensure her movement isn't limited by restrictive clothing.
- After energetic play offer her a drink of water, and ensure she doesn't get cold. Put on her jersey or take her inside for a while.

Kick The Ball

Whana pōro

Instructions

- Use a light-weight ball that is large enough for your toddler to kick easily (at least 13cm diameter).
- Place the ball on the floor and kick it back and forth against a wall or between two of you so that your toddler can watch.
- Then kick the ball slowly towards him and encourage him to kick it back.
- Repeat this, with plenty of praise for trying, until he tires of it.

Variations

- Try kicking a balloon, a ball made of aluminium foil, a dry bath sponge, a beach ball, or a pile of dry leaves or grass clippings in the garden.
- Take your toddler to watch a football game.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, lower body coordination, movement skills, and flexibility.
- Developing foot/eye coordination.
- Developing eye tracking.
- Learning through observation and exploring new capabilities.
- Learning new words.



Precautions

- Give plenty of praise with each attempt at kicking, even when he misses.
- Don't expect him to kick a ball that is too small, too large or too heavy.
- Do not over inflate the ball. Allow it to be soft to the touch.

Climb Up And Down

Piki me te heke taputapu

Instructions

- Provide a low, sturdy chair or the kitchen step ladder for your toddler to move around and climb up on.
- Give her space at the bench to work alongside you and imitate what you're doing.
- Teach her how to climb down safely.

Variations

- Encourage her to climb in and out of the car by herself when you go places.
- Teach her to put her chair or steps under a window and climb up to look outside, and then climb down again.
- Let her practice climbing on and off the bed.
- Take her to a playground with safe climbing equipment appropriate for her size.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, flexibility, coordination, and movement skills.
- Exploring new capabilities and independence.
- Learning through observation and word association.
- Developing body awareness and the proprioceptive sense.



Precautions

- Ensure the climbing apparatus is sturdy and won't tip over.
- Check that she can't reach objects that you don't want her to have.
- Keep car doors closed so that she doesn't play in the car alone.
- Ensure that she can't climb up to a window that she may fall out of.
- Supervise all climbing activities.

Got You! Kua mau koe!

Instructions

- Play tag with your toddler around the backyard, chasing her at her own pace, and then when you catch her: 'Got you!'
- Once she understands the game let her chase you (running at her pace) and catch you: 'Got you!'
- Have other children join in too, so that she sees you chase and catch them.

Variations

- Have races together running along side by side holding hands together.
- Let her try to catch you as you run in a circle around an obstacle, and change direction several times, letting her catch you often. Then change places and you try to catch her.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance and movement skills.
- Exercising many different muscles.
- Learning by observation, and beginning to interact and think about others.
- Having fun.



Precautions

- Ensure her movement isn't limited by restrictive clothing.
- After energetic play offer her a drink of water, and ensure she doesn't get cold. Put on a jersey or take her inside for a while.

Gentle Touch

Te awhiawhi me te mirimiri

Instructions

- In the evening before bedtime, begin to relax your toddler slowly with quiet games, or reading.
- Sit with her and stroke her back, arms, legs and massage her hands and fingers, feet and toes.
- Once she's in bed, finish the massage with a gentle back rub and several long, light, loving strokes from head to foot.

Variations

- Use massage strokes to soothe your toddler when she's ill, over excited, or angry.
- Get to know what massage she likes the most.
- If she has a favourite cloth or blanket that she likes the feel of, wrap it around your hand for massaging.
- If you have a pet, teach her how to stroke and pat it lovingly and gently, and point out the animal's response to her.
- Let her see you massaging other members of the family.

Main Benefits

- Developing loving touch (awhi) and body awareness.
- Encouraging relaxation.
- Enhancing parent/child relationships and learning stress management.



Precautions

- Don't extend this time together to the stage where either of you cease to enjoy it.

Wash Hands

Te horoi ringaringa

Instructions

- Teach your toddler how to wash and dry his hands.
- Have a stool or little step handy so that he can reach into the basin.
- Turn the cold water on and off for him and pass him the soap.
- Make handwashing a habit before and after meals, and after using the toilet.
- Give lots of praise.

Variations

- Let him try to clean his own teeth after each meal with some assistance from you.
- Encourage him to brush or comb his hair, and to feed himself with a spoon and fork.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills, upper body coordination, and balance.
- Asserting independence and a sense of achievement, by attempting activities he has learnt through observing others.
- Establishing healthy routines.



Precautions

- Supervise your toddler in the bathroom to avoid the risk of burns.
- Ensure your hot tap water temperature is no more than 55°C.
- It takes toddlers twice as long to do these activities than for you. Be patient and allow him the opportunity to learn and practice new skills.

Let's Draw

Tā pikitia

Instructions

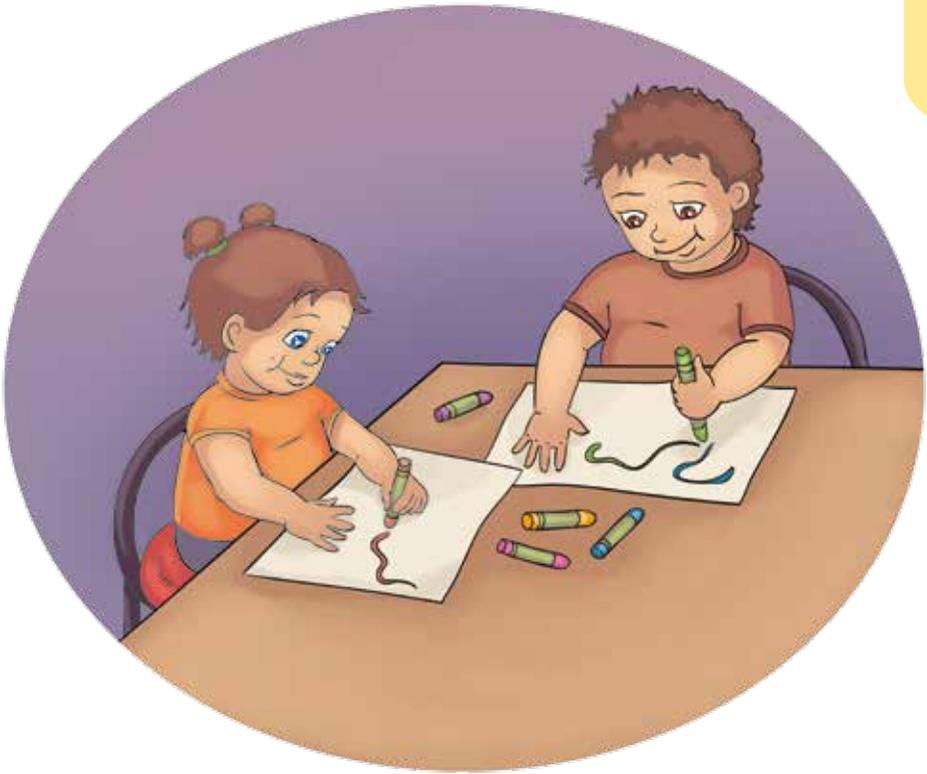
- Give your toddler the opportunity to draw with a pencil under your supervision.
- Show her how to draw straight lines and circles on a piece of paper, and then draw a smiling face.
- Allow her to hold the pencil in her own way, and use whichever hand she chooses.
- Give plenty of praise for all her efforts.
- Use directional language and talk about colours.

Variations

- Show her how to draw in wet sand with a stick.
- Provide her with paint (see [Recipes page 13](#)), a thick brush, and large pieces of paper to paint on. Use two or three primary colours and teach her to name the colours.
- Flour can be scattered on the table lightly, and shapes drawn in it with the fingers.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills and hand/eye coordination.
- Practicing fine motor skills.
- Encouraging him to think and use his imagination.
- Learning about colours and shapes.
- Learning by observation.



Precautions

- Pencils and paintbrushes can be very sharp - always supervise your toddler when she is using them.
- Ensure she is not putting things in her mouth that are dangerous or poisonous.

Stick And Paste

Ngā mahi whakapiri

Instructions

- Provide a large sheet of paper or cardboard to glue things on.
- Glue can be homemade (see [Recipes page 15](#)), or bought: a glue stick, or PVA glue watered down.
- Collect together a variety of items for your toddler to glue or paste with, such as scraps of material, paper, junk mail, leaves, seeds, straws, string, wool, shells and buttons.
- Show him how to create a picture.

Variations

- Help him decorate egg cartons or boxes to keep things in.
- Collect a few magnets and show him how to attach things to the fridge with them: pictures, ribbons, and scraps of material.
- Continue to encourage play with building blocks (page 36).
- He will enjoy single shape puzzles where each piece is one thing (eg car, duck) and has a little handle.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand/eye coordination and hand skills.
- Developing fine motor skills.
- Learning about colours and shapes.
- Learning by observing and imitating others.
- Encouraging creativity and imagination.



Precautions

- Old clothes or an apron are advisable when playing with glue.
- Supervise well if small objects are being used.
- Do not eat the glue.

Road Works

Whakatikatika rori

Instructions

- Turn the sand pit into a major construction area.
- Provide containers for digging and pouring, and equipment for bridges, roads and tunnels.
- Trucks, cars and bulldozers can be made from blocks of wood or cardboard boxes.
- Sink a bowl in the sand filled with water to make a lake, and float things on it.
- Your toddler and other children will spend many hours playing, digging, constructing and experimenting in the sand pit.
- Join in the games with her sometimes.

Variations

- If you can't have a sand pit, mark off a patch of dirt for the children to use.
- Visit a beach or sandy river and take containers and equipment with you, for your toddler to experiment with in the sand.
- Help your toddler set up an area on the floor inside with roads, bridges, tunnels and vehicles using blocks, cardboard, paper, boxes and other household items.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills and coordination.
- Exercising many different muscles.
- Discovering the concepts of size, shape, quantity, weight and displacement.
- Learning to observe and interact with others.
- Encouraging creativity and imagination.



Precautions

- Cover the sand pit or dirt patch when not in use to keep dogs and cats out.
- Put on sunblock and a hat to prevent sunburn, and woollen hats on cold, windy, days.
- Supervise all water play.

Cooking Fun

Te tunu kai

Instructions

- Have your toddler help you with the baking: stirring, mixing and kneading.
- Provide him with a space on the bench or table and a bowl of mixture, and let him copy what you're doing.
- Make and name simple shapes - square, triangle, circle.
- Put his 'creations' in the oven with yours for baking.

Variations

- Provide playdough (see [Recipes page 12](#)), clay or pastry for him to use instead. You can even make his own stove and oven by adapting a large cardboard box.
- Give him kitchen utensils such as a rolling pin, patty pans, biscuit cutters and blunt cutting utensils to use.
- Begin counting lessons by counting the number of dough shapes he has made.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills and hand/eye coordination.
- Developing the small muscles in the hands (fine motor skills).
- Learning through observation and word association.
- Encouraging creativity and imagination.



Precautions

- Do not leave your toddler in the kitchen unsupervised while the oven is on.
- Teach him the difference between hot and cold.
- Turn saucepan handles inwards so they are not over the edges of the stove, or use a stove guard.

Stepping

Ngā āhuatanga o te hīkoi

Instructions

- Lie a ladder down on the grass for your toddler to play with.
- Have her step between the rungs of the ladder from one end to the other.
- Then ask her to turn around and step on each rung as she walks back. To do this you will need to hold her hand for balance or she can bend over and walk on her hands and feet like a crab.
- Ask her to walk along with one foot either side of the ladder.

Variations

- Cut out some large stepping stones from newspaper, place them on the floor in a line fairly close together and try the same activities as above.
- On rainy days put on boots and step in puddles. Also step carefully between puddles and then run together trying to dodge the puddles.
- When walking along the footpath play a game where you're not allowed to stand on any cracks.
- Have other children join in.

Main Benefits

- Balancing on one foot, foot/eye coordination, movement skills and flexibility.
- Learning by observation and imitating.
- Exploring new capabilities.
- Developing body awareness.
- Judging distance and space.



Precautions

- If she becomes frustrated and has difficulty with the game leave it and let her go back to it when she's ready.

Music Fun

Mahi Waiata

Instructions

- Sing Hickory Dickory Dock,
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one, the mouse ran down,
Hickory Dickory Dock
- Teach your toddler how to do the hand actions of a mouse running up the clock by walking his fingers up the wall as far as he can reach.
- Then with the other hand point a finger in the air to signal the 'clock struck one', and then walk the mouse down the wall again.
- Repeat this quickly and then slowly, and include some music.

Variations

Kei whea kōnui

Kei whea kōnui

Kei kōnei, kei kōnei

Kei te pēwhea koe?

Kei te pai ahau

Oma atu, oma atu

Where is Thumbkin?

Where is Thumbkin?

Here I am, here I am

How are you today sir?

Very well thank you

Run away, run away

- Make up your own songs and put actions to them.

Main Benefits

- Improving hand/eye and upper body coordination.
- Coordinating movement with words.
- Developing a sense of rhythm, and learning through observation and word association.
- Developing memory skills.
- Imitating and following instructions.



Precautions

- Your toddler may not learn all the words of a song, but will join in on his favourite chorus or phrases.

Tumbling Tots

Tamaiti takahurihuri

2 - 2½ YEARS

Instructions

- Teach your toddler how to roll by lying on her tummy, and gently rolling her over and over sideways on a mat and then back the other way. Then encourage her to try it herself.

Variations

- Try these activities on the bed, outside on the grass or down a slight slope.
- Enrol her in a toddler movement class.

Main Benefits

- Developing flexibility, balance, movement skills and coordination.
- Stimulates the vestibular system, important for balance and spatial awareness.
- Exploring new capabilities and learning by observation.

Precautions

- Ensure her chin is tucked into her chest when rolling to prevent neck injury.
- Practice these activities on a soft surface to avoid injury.
- Don't force her with these activities, because she may lose confidence.
- Watch her when rolling on a bed or couch so she doesn't fall off.
- It is not advised for children to do forward rolls at this stage as they can injure their necks.

Parachutes

Ngā mahi heketau

Instructions

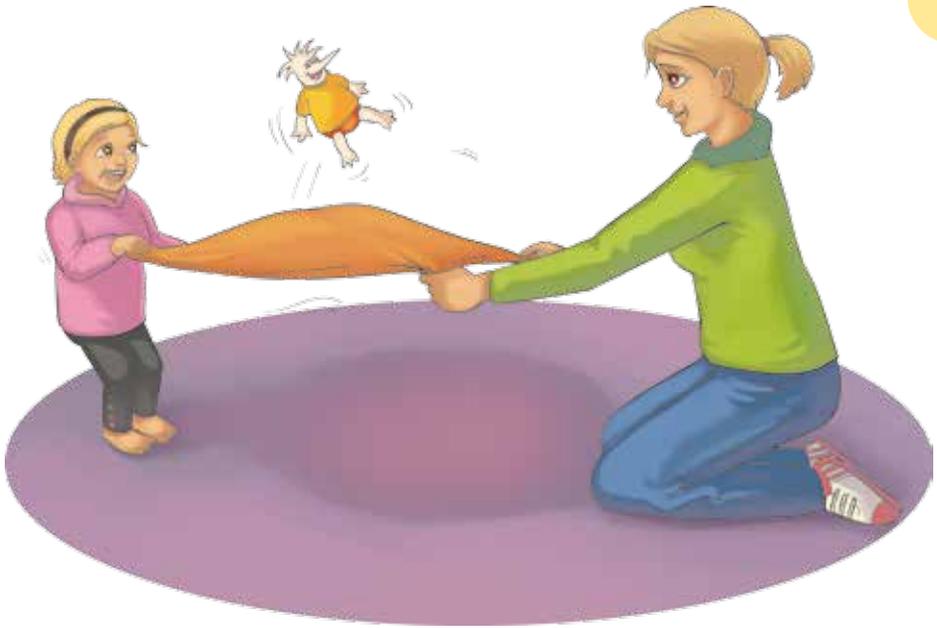
- Find a light scarf or a light piece of fabric.
- Hold two corners of the scarf and encourage your toddler to hold the other corners.
- Together flap the scarf up in the air so that when you bring it down it catches some wind and puffs up.
- Flap it up and down, encouraging him to lift it as high as he can and then drop his arms as low as he can.
- Use the words up and down as you do these actions.

Variations

- Blow up a balloon and rest it on the scarf, so that when you lift the scarf up the balloon becomes airborne. Move together to where the balloon is coming down and catch it in the scarf. Repeat this several times.
- Try putting other light items on the scarf like dried leaves or a soft toy.
- Play this game while you chant or sing, or play some music to move to.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills, balance, flexibility and strengthening and developing arm muscles.
- Discovering the concepts of weight, gravity and air resistance.
- Learning new words.
- Working together and developing cooperation.



Precautions

- Find an area with plenty of space to play this game to avoid knocking over things that you don't want damaged.

Aeroplanes

Ngā mahi waka rererangi

Instructions

- Encourage your toddler and other playmates to be aeroplanes: running around the backyard with their arms stretched out like wings, making the appropriate sounds.
- Have them land their planes to pick up and drop off passengers. Make some 'stop' and 'go' signs (red and green) and encourage them to (stop and go) when you hold them up.

Variations

- Let them pretend to be birds, gliders, helicopters or bumble bees.
- Take them to visit an airport, or to watch hand-gliders, or to see the seagulls on a windy day at the beach.
- Suggest other road vehicles they could be.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination, flexibility and movement skills.
- Learning by observing, interacting with, and thinking about others.
- Road safety taught early.
- Developing creativity and imagination.



Precautions

- Your toddler may prefer to make up her own game rather than take part in any structured play. Allow her the opportunity to do this.

Zoo Visit

Te haerenga ki te whare kararehe

Instructions

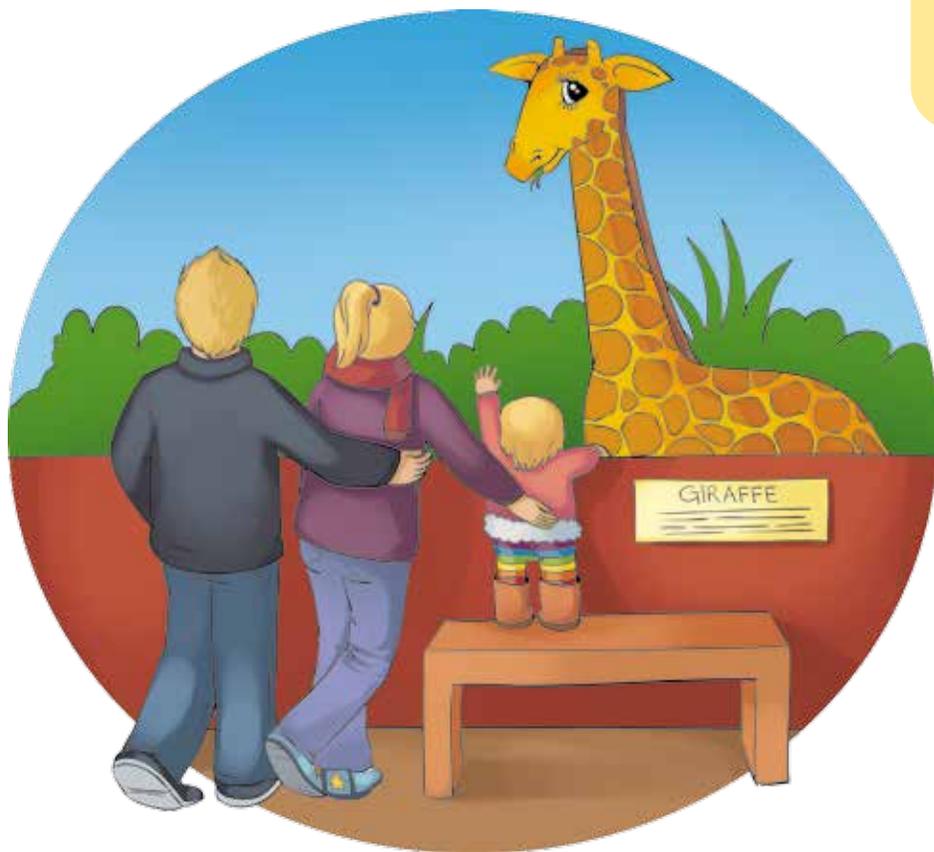
- Take your toddler to visit a zoo, an animal park or an aquarium.
- See if he can name the animals he recognises from the books and pictures you've shown him.
- Allow him plenty of time to stop and watch the animals that interest him, especially their movement.
- Time the visit so that he can see some animals being fed.
- Count how many animals he can see.
- At home encourage him to imitate the animals' movements.

Variations

- Make several visits to the zoo seeing only a few animals each time. Show him pictures and tell stories about the particular animals before you go to see them.
- Enable him to see nature programmes, dog trials and horse events.

Main Benefits

- Being active in the outdoors.
- Outings with exercise and fresh air.
- Observing movement skills.
- Observing and imitating movement and behaviour, and encouraging word association and curiosity.
- Learning to count.
- Sharing positive experiences.



Precautions

- Seeing too many animals all in one day can be overwhelming.

Jumping Beans

Ngā mahi pekepeke

Instructions

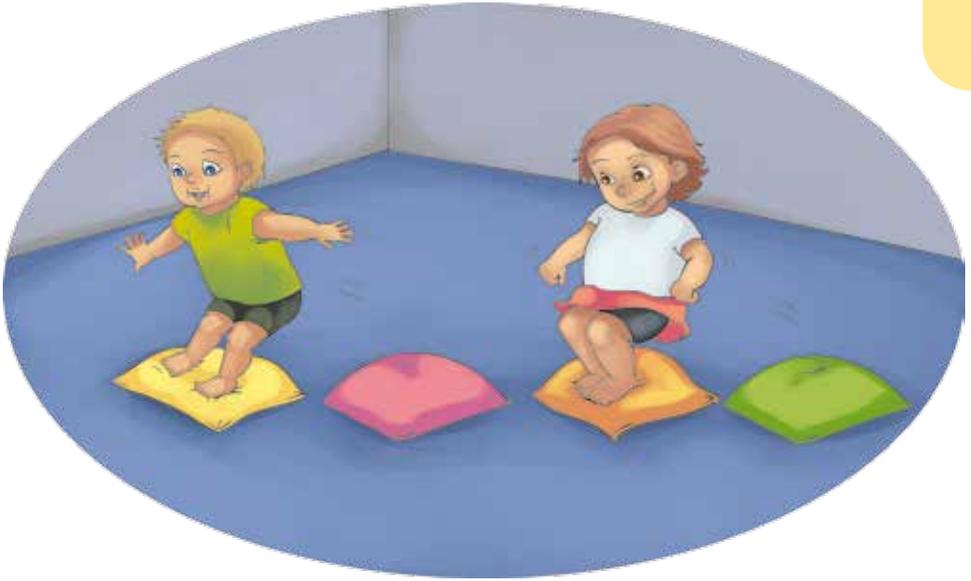
- Put an old cushion or mattress on the floor for your toddler and friends to jump on.
- Let her experiment with jumping on the floor and then jumping on the cushion.
- Encourage her to jump using her arms for balance, and then to jump with her eyes closed.
- Encourage jumping and bending the knees on landing. Hold her hands whilst she does this.

Variations

- Put on the radio, chant rhymes, or sing songs and jump around the room together to the beat.
- Hold hands and jump together, or form a circle with other children and jump around to the right and then to the left holding hands.
- Show her how to jump off a low step and then encourage her to jump while holding your hand.
- Have her jumping on the bed with you holding both her hands whilst standing on the floor.

Main Benefits

- Developing coordination, flexibility and balance.
- Strengthening the lower body, and exploring flight and landing.
- Learning by observing and imitating others.
- Exploring new capabilities.



Precautions

- Teach her to land on her feet with her knees slightly bent, so that she learns the correct way to prevent injury.
- If she has trouble with jumping go back to bobbing up and down, the stage before jumping.
- Have her practice having her arms out in front as she lands to provide stability.

Bouncing Ball

He pōro tāwhanawhana

Instructions

- Find a ball with plenty of bounce, that is not too hard. The ideal size is 13cm diameter.
- Drop the ball to the ground, let it bounce and catch it in two hands.
- Then let the ball bounce away from you until it stops.
- Give your toddler the opportunity to experiment with dropping and throwing the ball, chasing it as it bounces.

Variations

- Let him stand at the top of a few steps, drop it down the steps, retrieve it and do it again and again.
- Let him bounce it on different surfaces such as grass, dirt, concrete, carpet and try to bounce it in water.
- Find a long pipe or tube (or join several tubes together) so that he can drop the ball in at one end, and watch it bounce out the other end.
- Enable him to watch older children playing with a ball, and watch sports such as volleyball, netball and basketball.

Main Benefits

- Developing ball manipulation skills.
- Practicing balance and coordination.
- Practicing eye tracking.
- Encouraging thinking and curiosity, and learning by observation.



Precautions

- Don't expect him to catch the ball in the air yet.
- Ensure the play area is fenced so that your toddler cannot chase a ball onto the road.

Challenge Course

He huarahi taupare

Instructions

- Set up a course in the garden for your toddler to crawl through tunnels, step over obstacles, climb up and down and under and over. Use boxes, wood, ropes for crawling under, etc.
- Get down on the ground and show her how to do it.
- Let her do it a few times, and then have a race and let her win.
- Include other children in this game.
- Use lots of directional language; up, down, in, out, under, through, between, beside, low, high etc.

Variations

- Set up a course inside with chairs, boxes, blankets, cushions and low tables.
- Provide the opportunity for her to play on an adventure playground with plenty of supervision, and to watch other children.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination and flexibility.
- Exercising many muscles throughout her body.
- Learning through observing, imitating, and interacting with others.
- Developing spatial awareness.
- Learning to change body shape to fit through differing challenges.
- Developing problem solving skills.



Precautions

- If she is likely to fall ensure she will fall on carpet, or something soft.

Monkey Swing

Tārere makimaki

Instructions

- Hold a broomstick parallel to the ground between two adults.
- Encourage your toddler to hold onto it, swing on it, and lift his feet up off the ground.
- Let him have a rest, then have him hold on to the broomstick again and then lift him up so that his feet are just a few centimetres off the ground. Repeat this several times.

Variations

- Encourage him to swing on bars in a children's playground.
- Find a tree with low, thin branches that will hold his weight.
- Enrol him in a toddler movement class.
- Give him the opportunity to watch monkeys swinging at the zoo.

Main Benefits

- Developing upper body strength and flexibility.
- Developing the vestibular (balance) system.
- Learning through observation and curiosity.
- Exploring new capabilities.



Precautions

- Let your toddler discover his own limitations, so that he doesn't lose confidence in attempting his activity.



Rag Doll

Te Whātoro tinana

Instructions

- Teach your toddler how to lie down on the floor and let his limbs go floppy.
- Test how relaxed he is by shaking an arm or a leg.
- Make up a story about the rag doll floating on a fluffy white cloud.
- While you tell the story, use a natural massage oil ([page 142](#)) to slowly and gently massage down his back, arms and legs.
- Quietly name the body parts as you stroke them.
- Finish with a cuddle (awhi).

Variations

- Let him pretend to be a cat and stretch out his arms and legs, then stroke him as he lies quietly.
- Read his favourite books as you sit together quietly
- Try these activities before bedtime or if he's unwell or agitated.

Main Benefits

- Promoting general body control through relaxation.
- Increasing body awareness and an enhanced parent/child relationship.
- Developing creativity and imagination.
- Developing vocabulary.



Precautions

- Some toddlers are extremely active and won't sit still for long.
- Only continue if he is enjoying the activity.

Kitchen Magic

Ngā mahi kihini

2½ - 3 YEARS

Instructions

- Encourage your toddler to help you in the kitchen with food preparation.
- Let him measure and sift dry ingredients, then stir them for you as you add fluids, so he can see how it changes to a batter.
- Show him how the batter 'magically' changes when it is poured into a warm pan.

Variations

- Provide him with the opportunity to see how a solid ice cube melts, how sugar dissolves in water, and how baking soda froths when stirred into warm milk.
- Turn on the oven light so he can watch how cakes and biscuits rise.
- Let him get the vegetables and wash them for you. Talk about their different sizes and shapes.

Main Benefits

- Learning hand skills, and hand/eye coordination.
- Developing fine motor skills.
- Learning by observation and learning word association.
- Discovering the concepts of measures and weights and observing change.
- Developing new vocabulary.



Precautions

- Supervise your toddler in the kitchen while the oven is on.
- Reinforce the danger of the hot stove to him.
- Ensure he can't burn himself with the hot tap.
- Turn saucepan handles inwards so they are not over the edges of the stove, or use a stove guard.

Zips And Buttons

Ngā kumemau me ngā pātene

Instructions

- Give your toddler the opportunity to try to dress herself.
- At this age she is likely to want to pick her own clothes, so put out a selection of things for her to choose from.
- Let her practice doing up and undoing zips and domes herself.
- She will enjoy the feel and sound of undoing velcro several times.
- Encourage her to practice undoing large buttons.

Variations

- Let her dress her teddy or dolls.
- Make an activity cushion with zips, buttons, etc, sewn on to it.
- Give her the opportunity to attempt easy wooden puzzles that have no more than eight large pieces.
- Name the colours of items, and count how many there are, as she plays.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills and hand/eye coordination.
- Practicing using fine motor muscles (hands and fingers).
- Learning by observation.
- Encouraging her to think.
- Learning about numbers and colours.
- Developing independence and a sense of achievement.



Precautions

- It will take longer for her to learn how to do up buttons than to undo them.

Bowling

Ngā mahi pīrori

Instructions

- Stand five or six empty plastic bottles together, in a bunch, on the floor.
- Show your toddler how to roll a large, light ball along the floor to knock all the bottles over.
- Count how many bottles have been knocked over.
- Stand the bottles up again, have her stand two metres away from them and roll the ball towards them. Repeat several times.
- Give plenty of praise with every attempt.

Variations

- Place two obstacles on the ground, one metre apart, and have her roll the ball between them; roll it back again.
- Have other children play, encouraging them to take turns.

Main Benefits

- Learning ball skills and developing balance, coordination and flexibility.
- Tracking moving objects from near to far.
- Having fun, and learning to interact and think about others.
- Learning to count.
- Learning colours.



Precautions

- Don't use plastic bottle that have contained poisonous or harmful substances in case she tries to drink from them.

Gardening

Te mahi māra

Instructions

- Show your toddler how vegetables and flowers grow.
- Let him have his own garden plot, spade and trowel.
- Plant some of his favourite vegetables or those that are easy to grow and are tasty.
- Interesting vegetables to grow are zucchini, carrots, beans, radishes and tomatoes.
- Tend them together, watch their progress, and discuss the insects that eat them.
- Pick the produce together and include it in your meals.

Variations

- Grow a flower garden with many different colours, varieties and smells. Discuss the bees, butterflies and other insects that are found in the flowerbed.
- Pick some flowers together to arrange in a vase or to give to someone.
- Grow plants in pots or plastic containers both inside and outside.
- Try growing bean sprouts together, or growing seeds on a piece of damp cloth, or sprouting a carrot or kumara.

Main Benefits

- Developing hand skills, hand/eye coordination, and flexibility.
- Learning about nature and how plants grow.
- Learning by observation and word association.



Precautions

- Provide him with tools that are the right size for him.
- Toddlers imitate everything you do so he may pull out a whole row of plants calling them weeds, and he may pick a whole crop of green tomatoes for you thinking that he's being helpful.

Hokey Tokey

Hoke toke

Instructions

- Sing this song and do these actions, encouraging your toddler to imitate you. Have others join in too. To do the Hokey Tokey wriggle your body from side to side.
- **Hoke Toke**
To ringa ki roto
To ringa ki waho
To ringa ki roto
Ka hurihurihia
Kei te hope hope au
Kei te hurihuri au
Kei te pakipaki au e
- **Hokey Tokey**
Your hands to the inside
Your hands to the outside
Your hands to the inside
And shake, shake, shake
I am swinging my hips
I am turning around
I am clapping my hands
- Repeat the song changing ringa (hands) to waewae (feet), mahunga (head), pakahiwi (shoulders), puku (stomach), nono (bottom), etc.

Variations

- Jack and Jill run up the hill to fetch a pail of water, Jack fell over amongst the clover, And Jill came tumbling after.
- Encourage your toddler and her friends to follow the directions of the song: run up a hill, fall over, and then roll down again.
- Try other action songs or make up your own.
- Use nursery rhymes on tapes or CDs with your toddler.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination, flexibility and movement skills.
- Having fun and learning to interact and think about others.
- Learning new words.
- Developing a sense of rhythm and timing.
- Developing memory skills.



Precautions

- Don't force your toddler to join in. Let him take his time and watch others playing.

Big And Little

Te iti me te nui

Instructions

- Teach your toddler how to be big: take a big breath in, push out your chest, and stand as tall as you can.
- Then become little: blow out your breath, round your shoulders and crouch down.
- Repeat this again a few times, and then do the same activity while walking around the room: 'big' walks on tip toes and 'little' walks on his knees.
- Use words like tall, small, tiny, large, wide and skinny in this activity



Variations

- Pretend to be a balloon: breath in as you blow up the balloon and become as large and round as you can, and then scrunch up into a ball as you blow your breath out. Repeat this several times.

Main Benefits

- Breathing, stretching and flexibility exercises.
- Developing body awareness.
- Using his imagination and learning relaxation exercises.
- Learning new words.



Precautions

- Don't extend this activity to the stage where either of you cease to enjoy it.

Board Walk Te ara hīkoi

2½ - 3 YEARS

Instructions

- Place a ladder or board on a slight slope and help your toddler move up and down it.
- Have her try this sitting on her bottom, pushing herself up with her hands and feet.
- She can climb up forwards on hands and feet, or walk up while holding your hand.

Variations

- Assist her to balance and move along a beam or rail.
- Include boards or ladders in a challenge course out in the garden ([page 110](#)).
- Take her for a walk past a building site where she can watch builders climbing up and down ladders.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination, flexibility, and movement skills.
- Discovering the concept of height and learning by observation.



Precautions

- Toddlers have no sense of danger. Supervise all climbing activities, and ensure she will land on a soft surface if she falls.
- The safest way to minimise climbing accidents is to teach her how to climb both up and down.

Row The Boat

Te hoe Waka

Instructions

- Sit on the floor with your legs straddled and your toddler sitting between your legs with his back to you. Have him hold your hands and then pretend to row the boat, rocking back and forth together.

Sing Row, row, row your boat
 Gently down the stream,
 Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
 Life is but a dream.

- Repeat this quickly and then slowly.
- Add some music.

Variations

- See-saw: sit facing each other in the straddle position holding hands. Rock back and forth singing or chanting a rhyme.
- Lie back on your elbows with knees bent and feet to feet. (Your left foot flat against his right foot, and your right foot flat against his left). Alternately push each foot back and forth, like riding a bicycle. Gradually increase the resistance so that he has to push harder against your feet.

Main Benefits

- Increasing flexibility and strengthening abdominal muscles.
- Developing coordination and rhythm.
- Having fun and learning to interact and to think about others.
- Developing memory through music.



Precautions

- Don't extend this activity to the stage where you both cease to enjoy it.

Up To The Top

Te piki me te heke taputapu

Instructions

- Visit a children's playground where there is a variety of equipment to climb on.
- Encourage climbing up ladders, the slide, climbing walls and other climbing equipment.

Variations

- Take your toddler and a friend to visit a farm.
- Find an easy gate to climb and teach them how to climb up and over it, and down the other side.
- Encourage them to climb some hay bales in the barn and then come down again.
- Find a steep hill and climb to the top with them to see what can be seen from there.
- Sand dunes at the beach are great to climb.
- Take bushwalks together where the tracks are moderately steep and/or include steps.
- Set up your own challenge course at home ([page 110](#)).
- Climb trees together.
- Join a toddler movement class.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills, balance and coordination, and strengthening muscles.
- Enjoying exercise and movement with you as a role model.
- Encouraging exploring and curiosity.
- Developing vocabulary.



Precautions

- Supervise all climbing activities - toddlers have no sense of danger. The safest way to minimise climbing accidents is to teach them how to climb both up and down.
- Ensure the height of the equipment they're climbing and the surface underneath is safe.
- Ensure all fences and gates are secure so she does not come to any harm.

Clouds And Rainbows

Ngā kapua me te kōpere

Instructions

- Show your toddler how to draw his own clouds and rainbows in the air.
- Encourage him to draw them first with one hand then the other.
- Ask him to make them as big as he can and then as high as he can.
- Name the colour of each rainbow stripe as he draws them, and identify each colour you name.
- Use words like fluffy, soft, round and bubbly to describe the clouds.

Variations

- Give him a scarf or ribbon to draw shapes in the air with.
- Show him how to draw large clouds and rainbows in the sand with a stick.
- Lay down a large sheet of paper, or newspapers, and ask him to draw large clouds and rainbows with crayons.

Main Benefits

- Developing movement skills, balance, and strengthening and developing arm muscles.
- Learning by example and using his imagination.
- Encouraging him to think.
- Identifying colours and shapes.



Precautions

- Allow him to draw things as he sees them, don't expect to be able to recognise his picture, but give plenty of praise for his efforts.

Horse Riding

Te eke hoiho

Instructions

- Make your toddler a horse to ride: stuff a paper bag with newspaper and draw eyes and ears on it for the horse's head, a ribbon for reins, and attach it to a garden stake or broom handle.
- Show her how to ride around the garden on it making horse sounds and chanting rhymes.

Gee up neddy
Don't you stop
Hear your feet
Go clippity clop
Clippity clop
and round and round
Giddy up
We're homeward bound.

Variations

- Make up your own rhymes and songs to trot to, and include music.
- Find a long piece of rope that can be a horse, and have other children all hop on and ride it around the garden together.
- Change the speed and the directions several times.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, flexibility, lower body coordination and movement skills.
- Using her imagination, developing rhythm, and learning by observation.



Precautions

- Toddlers enjoy swinging things in the air, so put the horses away when they've finished riding them, to avoid injuries.
- After this activity offer her a drink of water, and ensure she cools down slowly.

Up And Over

Te whiu pōro

Instructions

- Use a light-weight, soft ball that your toddler can easily hold in one hand.
- Set up two chairs facing back to back with a piece of string tied between them.
- Using an over arm throw, show him how to throw the ball over the string in an upwards arc.
- He can then run to the other side and try to throw it back again.

Variations

- Vary the height of the string.
- Replace the ball with a sand bag, a ball made of aluminium foil, or a wet sponge can be fun on a hot day.
- Throw the ball over a bush, wall, wheelbarrow or other object.
- Let him stand or sit on a step or tree stump to throw the ball.
- Have playmates join in and encourage them to take turns throwing.
- This can be adapted to indoor play for rainy days using soft items to throw such as a ball of wool, a soft toy or socks.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination, flexibility, and movement skills.
- Practicing to track moving objects.
- Learning ball skills, and observation.
- Experimenting with weight and gravity and learning to count.



Precautions

- Your toddler may lose confidence if he gets hit by a ball, so don't expect him to catch the ball in the air.
- Avoid conflict by ensuring he knows what he is and is not allowed to throw around.

Truck Driver

Te taraiwa waka

Instructions

- Encourage your toddler to pretend to be a truck driver.
- Set up a road around the house and garden: using footpaths, grass, sharp corners, trees for roundabouts, boxes for tunnels, etc.
- Have your toddler walk around the course, making the sound of a truck, and pretending to use the steering wheel. A paper plate or lid can be used as a steering wheel.
- When she has done it a few times, have her turn and go in the opposite direction around the course.
- Then ask her to drive very fast and run around the course.

Variations

- Let her pretend to be a motorbike, car, tractor or a bus.
- Introduce a petrol station, shop, bus stop, and traffic lights where she stops for various reasons.
- She could ride a sit-on toy, tricycle, or horse ([page 132](#)) around the course.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, coordination, flexibility and movement skills.
- Beginning to develop imagination and word association skills.



Precautions

- Toddlers see things differently from adults so give her the opportunity to adapt things to suit her own play.

Frog Leap

Te peke o te poraka

Instructions

- Tell a story about a frog to your toddler and show him a picture of one.
- You may even find one for him if you visit a swampy area.
- Show him how to frog leap around the garden, make noises like frogs and flick out his tongue to pretend to catch flies.
- Have other children join in frog leaping.
- Provide challenges to frog leap over.
- Teach him how to land on both feet with his knees bent and arms in front.

Variations

- Play the same game pretending to be a grasshopper, cricket or sparrow.
- Cut out stepping stones from a piece of newspaper and encourage him to leap from one stone to another.
- Encourage him to jump from various heights (no higher than his knees) onto a soft surface, landing with his knees slightly bent and arms in front.

Main Benefits

- Developing balance, movement skills and lower body strength.
- Learning to observe: learning by example and correct instruction.
- Practicing safe landings.
- Developing imagination.



Precautions

- Do not force him to jump from a height if he does not want to as this may cause him to lose confidence.
- Encourage knees bent on all landings.

Swan Lake

Kanikani hitekiteki

Instructions

- Find some classical music on the radio and glide around the lounge like a ballet dancer.
- Encourage your toddler to imitate your gliding, swaying, bending and arm movements.
- Allow her to develop her own style of dancing to music.

Variations

- Put on rock and roll, jazz, or rap music and move to the beat together.
- Do a waltz or foxtrot with her standing on your feet and moving with you.
- Try country and western music: tap your feet and lock arms and dance in a circle to music.
- Give her the opportunity to watch others dancing and enjoying music.
- Join a toddler music group, or movement class.

Main Benefits

- Improving balance, flexibility, coordination and movement skills.
- Developing a sense of rhythm, learning by observation and having fun.
- Encouraging creativity and imagination.



Precautions

- Don't laugh at your toddler's attempt to dance as she may become self conscious about dancing.

Toddler Massage

Ngā āhuatanga o te mirimiri kōhungahunga

- Provide your toddler with plenty of cuddles, loving touch and close contact every day.
- Make the most of opportunities to massage him when he's sitting quietly looking at books or toys, during bath time, while you're dressing him, at bedtime or any other time he needs calming or settling.
- Use cuddles and reassuring touch to dispel your toddler's anxieties and fears and to help both of you to deal with frustration and tantrums.
- Use massage techniques particular to your own culture. For generations Māori have focused on massage as part of the inter-relationship between body, spirit and iwi.
- Allow him to give permission to be massaged or cuddled and to break contact when he chooses.
- Be aware of your toddler's likes and dislikes with loving touch and adapt your massage technique accordingly.
- Massage oils; use natural vegetable oils. What is put on your toddlers skin may be absorbed into the body. Warm the oil by pouring a little on your hands and rubbing them together.

All toddlers, including those with special needs, respond well to cuddles and loving touch.

Massage Techniques

Ngā āhuatanga mirimiri

Instructions

Make sure your shoulders and hands are relaxed. Make your movements slow and rhythmic, maintaining continuous skin contact at all times (one hand on the toddler).

There are two main techniques used:

1. Stroking (to spread oil and promote circulation)

Gliding gently along the surface of the skin in one sweeping movement, always keeping in contact with the skin.

2. Kneading (to promote blood flow and encourage the release of waste products)

Gently moving the muscles underneath the skin, using the fingertips and thumbs to knead the tissues. This is a slightly deeper massage stroke. When using the kneading technique always work towards the heart as this promotes draining (wrist to shoulders, ankles to thighs).

Generally for each body part:

- Repeat each technique 2-3 times except for face strokes which are one stroke only because the face is a more sensitive area.
- Be flexible, eg: do more of the strokes that the baby obviously likes.
- Try to get even cover of the whole body; left and right. Spend equal time on each side or your child may feel 'lopsided'. This will promote even muscle development and stimulate both sides of the brain.
- Massage strokes should be light, gentle and consistent.

The Front of the Body

Begin with the front so that you can establish eye contact and talk to your toddler. Verbally identify the body parts as you massage.

The Head and Face

Using fingertips (most people use no oil):

- Stroke around the top of the head using palms or fingers.
- Stroke down the sides of face using fingertips.
- From the centre of the forehead to the temples.
- In circles on the temples.
- Eyebrows from nose to temple.
- From nose over cheeks to ears.
- From inner corners of eyes down sides of nose to corners of mouth.
- From centre of chin out to the ears.
- Behind the ears from top to bottom.
- The ears back and front, following their shape.



The Arms (use oil as needed from here onwards)

- Stroke from fingertips to shoulders (x3).
- Knead the palm of the hand using your thumb.
- Stroke each finger using your fingertips and thumb.
- Stroke the back of hands using fingers.
- Massage wrist using thumb and forefinger.
- Squeeze the muscles gently using your fingers and thumbs from the wrist to the shoulder.
- Massage using the kneading stroke from wrist to shoulder.
- Finish by stroking of whole arm (x3) from wrist to shoulder.



Note: while working on the hands, encourage him to look at what you are doing and talk with him about what you are doing.

The Chest

- Start at the centre front of the chest, use both hands to stroke in a down-and-out direction, following the spaces between the ribs. This strokes the small muscles between the ribs used for breathing (be very gentle on this area).
- Start at the centre front of the chest where the ribs meet at the lower end of the breastbone. Using both thumbs, stroke down and out following the line of the bottom rib. This follows the line of the big breathing muscle or diaphragm.



These strokes can be useful if your child suffers from 'wheeziness' or 'chestiness'.

The Stomach

Use the palm of your hand in a stroking movement clockwise around the belly button. This stroke follows the natural direction of the large bowel.



This stroke can be particularly useful if a child is constipated.

The Legs

- Stroke from toes to tops of thighs (x3).
- Knead muscles gently using your fingers and thumbs, from ankle to thigh.
- Massage the ankle area following natural shapes with your palms or fingers.
- Use your thumbs to massage the soles of her feet from heel to toes.
- Stroke each toe individually.
- Finish with stroking the whole leg (x3).



To complete the front: Using both hands, once for each half of the body, stroke slowly from neck to toes.

The Back of the Body

Turn your child over to massage the back of the body.

The Head

Use fingers and palms to stroke from top of head to base of skull.



The Back

- Start with slow circular massage on the lower back (avoid spine).
- Using fingertips stroke upwards from buttocks to neck on either side of the spine (x3).
- Using fingertips of both hands massage muscles in small circular movements in an upwards direction, on either side of the spine.
- Finish with stroking in an upward direction (x3).



The Legs

Stroke the legs from the toes to the top of the thighs (x3).

To Complete the Back

From top of head to tips of toes, give several long, light, loving strokes.

To Finish

Lay a blanket over your toddler and let her relax for a while if she chooses. Share a cuddle with her to complete the massage.



Variations

- Give your toddler the opportunity to massage you and other members of the family too.
- Play body part games that involve massage such as 'This little piggy...' with the toes or 'Round and round the garden...' on their hands. For even brain and body development, do both right and left hands or feet.
- Pretend to be an animal (eg a cat) and stroke and pat each other the way you would stroke and pat the animal.

Main Benefits

- Toning skin and muscles.
- Developing loving touch and awareness.
- Promoting general body control through relaxation.
- Enhancing parent/child relationship and learning stress management.

Precautions

- Do not expect your toddler to sit still in one place for a period of time. Make the most of opportunities to massage as they occur.
- Do not use oil on your toddler's skin before going outside because of the risk of sunburn.
- Do not extend massage time beyond the stage when either of you cease to enjoy it.
- In Māori culture the head is considered to be sacred. Find out about massage techniques that are particular to your culture.

Sport Waikato will send you the KiwiPreschooler® manual when your toddler reaches three years old. If you have not received it please contact the address below.

If you have any queries, or require information or advice

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You may also like to obtain a copy of the Active Movement activity guides for under fives.

Call 0800 ACTIVE (0800 22 84 83) to obtain your free copy.



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Excerpts of the Massage section have been taken from the **KiwiBaby manual**, written by Gael Muthukumaraswamy for Sport Waikato.



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Sport Waikato's vision is 'active for life'.

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