Health and Physical Development

- Fine (Small) Motor Skills
- · Gross (Large) Motor Skills
- Health Behaviors and Practices
- Nutrition
- · Self Help Skills

All young children require consistent, caring adult supervision and support to make sure health needs are being met. These needs include good nutrition, primary and preventive health and dental care, and healthy, safe environments. Learning experiences are integrated into these basic activities, which should be structured to encourage infants and toddlers to explore their world, promote coordination and strength, enhance thinking skills, and develop an "I can do it" mentality. Young children should be introduced to indoor and outdoor space and facilities that allow them to experience a variety of developmentally appropriate physical activities and help them develop the foundation for a healthy lifestyle.



The development of fine (small) motor and gross (large) motor skills, as well as self-help skills, is a critical part of development for infants and toddlers. These skills are essential for the successful achievement of developmental milestones during the first three years. They also serve as a foundation for the development of future academic skills such as reading and writing.

Strategies to support inclusive learning environments:

- Ensure that materials in indoor and outdoor environments are safe and easily accessible (height, size, location)
- Use verbal, visual, and physical cues to help the child know what to do
- Provide encouragement and support for the child to maximize successful attempts to accomplish tasks
- Provide physical guidance and support, if needed, for children having difficulty with motor tasks
- Provide adaptive equipment and materials as needed to ensure child's successful participation.

Some general accommodations to support children with special learning or developmental needs can be found on page 9 of this document, and in NDE Rule 51.

Fine (Small) Motor Skills Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child uses eyes, mouth and hands to explore large and small objects that are within reach, developing more purposeful actions over time
 - > Increases eye-hand coordination to perform a variety of simple activities
 - Begins to develop fine (small) motor skills through playing with toys and materials
- · Child actively explores the environment and manipulates objects
 - Discovers the properties of objects (texture, sound, taste, etc.)

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Engages in activities which require eye-hand coordination and the use of small muscles (puts items in mouth, bats at objects, grasps toys, etc.)
- Explores textures in the environment (carpet, tile, rugs, grass, etc.)
- Handles objects with growing skill (rattles, simple toys, etc.) that are large enough not to be a choking hazard
- Begins to manipulate materials (kicks at mobile, puts objects into containers, dumps items, stacks blocks, etc.)
- Begins cause and effect play with toys (pushes button on toy to hear music or see lights flash)

The Adult

- Ensures that materials do not present choking or other safety hazards
- Plans meaningful and challenging activities with materials that support the development of fine (small) motor skills (plays with rattles, blocks, plastic keys, etc.)
- Allows opportunities for spontaneous exploration that encourages fine (small) motor skill development
- Provides daily opportunities for hands-on activities and manipulation of materials during indoor and outdoor play, including tummy time for non-mobile infants
- Protects children from toxic materials, such as those containing lead, and cleaning products

- Variety of age appropriate toys and materials and household items (rattles, musical toys, simple blocks, pots, pans, spoons, etc.)
- Various toys and materials placed at the child's level for independent access (soft animals, dolls, nesting cups, books, etc.)

Fine (Small) Motor Skills Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child uses hands and fingers to control objects to demonstrate increasing fine (small) motor coordination
 - > Increases eye-hand coordination skills to perform a variety of tasks
 - > Develops fine (small) motor skills through playing with toys and materials
 - Uses strength and control to perform simple tasks
- · Child actively explores the environment and manipulates objects
 - > Explores drawing and writing by scribbling and painting
 - > Puts puzzles together, sets table with dishes and play food, etc.

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Explores textures in the environment (indoor and outdoor materials that are smooth, rough, soft, hard, squishy, etc.)
- Participates in activities which require the use of small muscles (cause and effect play, action activated toys, container play, etc.) that are large enough not to be a choking hazard
- Handles objects with growing skill (places shapes in corresponding opening in shape box, strings large beads, completes simple puzzles, etc.)
- Puts connecting blocks together and pulls them apart with relative ease
- · Holds and uses large crayons and pencils, paint brushes, scissors, etc.

The Adult

- Ensures that materials do not present choking or other safety hazards
- Provides daily opportunities for outdoor play
- Provides meaningful and challenging activities to help children build more advanced fine (small) motor skills
- Protects children from toxic materials, such as those containing lead, and cleaning products

- Variety of age appropriate toys and materials and household items (puzzles, musical toys, simple blocks, pots, pans, spoons, etc.)
- Various toys and materials placed at the child's level for independent access (cars, dolls, puppets, pegs/peg boards, etc.)

Gross (Large) Motor Skills Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- · Child begins to develop gross (large) motor skills
 - > Waves arms, kicks legs, rolls over, sits up, etc.
- · Child builds skills in coordination, balance, body awareness and coordination
- Child actively explores a safe and supportive environment, both indoors and outdoors
 Crawls, cruises, walks with increasing ability

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Gains voluntary control of arm and leg movements
- Begins to use arms and legs purposefully (lifts head, claps hands, holds arms out for dressing, pulls to stand, throws objects, etc.)
- Engages in gross (large) motor activities (rolls over, sits, crawls, stands, walks, etc.)
- Imitates activities involving gross (large) motor movement (pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo, so-big, etc.)

The Adult

- Allows the child floor time to move freely and use gross (large) motor skills to explore the environment
- Encourages the child to use a variety of gross (large) muscle movements (roll, crawl, sit, stand, etc.) both indoors and outdoors, on a daily basis
- Plays imitation games with the child to encourage development of body awareness and gross (large) motor skills
- Provides a safe environment for exploration (outlets covered, toxic materials out of reach, sharp objects/corners removed or covered, etc.)
- Limits infant's time in confining equipment (swings, bouncers, exersaucers, cribs, car seats, etc.); walkers should not be used

- A variety of equipment and materials to encourage gross (large) motor development (balls, push/pull toys, small climbing structures, etc.)
- Open space for movement and exploration, both indoors and outdoors (open floor space for crawling, pulling up to stand, cruising, walking, etc.)
- Soft surface materials of various heights for climbing over, on, around, etc.

Gross (Large) Motor Skills Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child develops gross (large) motor skills
 - > Runs, jumps, hops, throws, climbs up and down steps, etc.
 - Coordinates both hands to manipulate large objects
- · Child demonstrates coordination, balance, and body awareness
- Child actively explores a safe and supportive environment, both indoors and outdoors
 - Walks, runs, climbs, hops, rolls, etc.
- Child shows growing skill in climbing up and down steps

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Plays actively in both indoor and outdoor settings daily
- Engages in increasingly complex gross (large) motor tasks (runs, climbs, walks up stairs holding someone's hand or a rail, rides a tricycle, etc.)
- Participates in a variety of gross (large) motor activities (dances, throws a ball, "Ring Around the Rosey", etc.)

The Adult

- Acknowledges and supports the child's need to move and be active throughout the day
- Provides adequate time for the child to practice, explore and expand motor skills and interests
- Provides space and supervision for both indoor and outdoor activities on a daily basis
- Provides a safe environment for exploration (outlets covered, toxic materials out of reach, sharp objects/corners removed or covered, etc.)

- · A variety of equipment (riding toys, climbing apparatus, steps, etc.)
- Materials to encourage gross (large) motor development (balls, push/pull toys, blocks, etc.)
- Open space for movement and exploration, both indoors and outdoors, that meet safety standards including cushioning material under climbing equipment
- A variety of surfaces to explore outdoors (grass, dirt, sand, cement, etc.)

Health Behaviors & Practices Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child shows increasing awareness of health and safety practices through repetition, imitation and adult conversation about what is happening
- Child shows interest in physical activities that promote health
- Child begins to understand and initiate good hygiene practices (offers hands to be washed, mimics cleaning, etc.)

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Participates in health and hygiene activities (diapering, washing hands, brushing teeth, etc.)
- Responds to adult guidance related to health and safety practices ("Let's wash your hands", "Time for a diaper change", etc.)
- Participates in physical activities, both indoors and outdoors

The Adult

- Provides a safe physical environment; completes regular safety checks, both indoors and outdoors
- Models good health and safety practices, especially proper hand washing techniques
- Performs caregiving routines slowly and carefully, telling child what is coming next, and waiting for child readiness before taking each step
- Provides opportunities for children to be physically active
- Closely supervises children and monitors their physical health including procedures to follow regarding allergies, medications, etc.

- Safe physical space for children to explore without risks to health and safety, both indoors and outdoors
- Space and furnishings which allow for sound health and hygiene practices (separate diapering and food prep areas, sinks, refrigerators, etc.)
- Posted health and safety guidelines, including schedule for washing/sanitizing toys and materials
- Safe sleeping environment (crib or playpen with firm mattress, no thick blankets, toys, pillows, bumper pads, or other soft items)

Health Behaviors & Practices Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- · Child shows increasing awareness of health and safety practices and guidelines
- Child shows interest in physical activities that promote health (wiping off tables, dressing for the weather, etc.)
 - > Begins to understand the benefits of exercise
- Child begins to understand and initiate good hygiene practices (washes hands, offers to help with cleaning, etc.)

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Participates in a variety of physical activities, both indoors and outdoors (runs, jumps, climbs, swings, hops, etc.)
- Cooperates with and participates in health and hygiene activities (washing hands, brushing teeth, etc.)
- Responds to adult guidance and reminders related to health and safety ("Feet on the floor", "Time to wash hands", etc.)

The Adult

- Provides a safe physical environment; completes regular safety checks, both indoors and outdoors
- Models good health and safety practices, especially proper hand washing techniques
- · Provides encouragement and opportunities to learn health and safety practices
- · Provides opportunities for children to be physically active
- Closely supervises children and monitors their physical health including procedures to follow regarding allergies, medications, etc.

- Safe physical space for children to explore without risks to health and safety, both indoors and outdoors
- Space and furnishings which allow for sound health and hygiene practices (separate diapering and food prep areas, child-sized toilets and sinks, refrigerators, etc.)
- Posted health and safety guidelines, including schedule for washing/sanitizing toys and materials

Nutrition Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- · Child gains weight within normal growth range
- · Child begins to develop healthy eating and lifestyle habits
 - Successfully transitions from breast milk or formula to milk or milk substitute, such as soy
 - Begins eating solid food
- Child shows increasing independence in ability to feed self

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Shows increasing interest in food and meal times (from recognizing breast or bottle to holding bottle or cup; from opening mouth for food to finger feeding, etc.)
- Tries and eats a variety of foods
- Uses actions or words to indicate needs/preferences (turns head away, reaches toward food, etc.)

The Adult

- Is aware of allergies of individual child; serves foods that do not pose a choking hazard
- Responds to infants' individual feeding needs and schedules
- · Holds infants while bottle feeding
- Follows health and safety guidelines related to child nutrition
- Works with parents and health care providers to coordinate the introduction of new foods
- Acknowledges families' cultural or religious food preferences
- · Respects the child's food preferences and developing self-feeding abilities
- Encourages the child to establish healthy eating habits
- Provides accommodations for breast feeding, and/or use of expressed breast milk

- Materials and furnishings to support children's developing nutrition habits and independence in eating (child-sized furniture, dishes, utensils, cups, etc.)
- Good hygiene and sanitation practices related to food and nutrition; hand washing procedure signs are posted and followed
- Posted individual feeding schedules for infants including allergies and family food preferences

Nutrition Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- · Child begins to develop healthy eating and lifestyle habits
 - > Eats a variety of table foods
- Child shows increasing independence in developing eating abilities
 - > Eats own food at the table with other children and/or adults
- · Child communicates nutrition-related information
 - Asks for more
 - Names foods that are served

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Tries a variety of foods (vegetables, meat, breads, dairy, fruits, etc.)
- Begins to serve self some foods with adult assistance
- Eats independently using child-sized dishes and utensils
- Exhibits food preferences; may have periods of picky eating or increased appetite
- · Shows interest in dramatic play materials related to food and nutrition

The Adult

- Is aware of allergies of individual child; serves foods that do not pose a choking hazard
- Provides assistance to children in feeding themselves and helping with cleanup
- Encourages children's interest in and exploration of foods, both real and pretend
- · Acknowledges families' cultural or religious food preferences
- Follows health and safety guidelines related to child nutrition
- Sets realistic expectations for children in developing manners and etiquette

- Materials and furnishings to support children's developing nutrition habits and independence in eating (child-size tables, chairs, etc.)
- Visual (books, pictures, etc.) and dramatic play props (dishes, foods, etc.) that support children's growing interest in foods and nutrition
- Good hygiene and sanitation practices related to food and nutrition; hand washing procedure signs are posted and followed
- · Posted information on individual child allergies and family food preferences

Self-Help Skills Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- · Child calms self with familiar, comforting items and adult support
- · Child shows increasing awareness of the function of self-care materials
 - > Puts tissue to nose, toothbrush to mouth
- Child cooperates with care routines
 - Dressing, bathing, feeding

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Uses different cries, words and gestures to indicate wants and needs (hunger, sickness, sleepy, joy, etc.)
- Shows body awareness related to basic care routines (quiets when placed on changing table, puts brush/comb to hair, etc.)
- Begins to participate in care routines (washes and dries hands with adult assistance, puts arms out when shirt is being put on, participates in picking up toys, etc.)
- Holds own spoon while being spoon fed

The Adult

- · Understands and recognizes the meaning of different cries
- · Meets the child's basic care needs in a consistent and timely manner
- Talks about care routines as they are occurring ("Now we're going to put on your socks.")
- Encourages the child's interest and participation in basic care routines (diapering, dressing, bathing, etc.)
- · Makes care routines an enjoyable experience

- Equipment and furnishings that promote health and safety for both children and staff (hand rails, cabinet locks, outlet covers, fenced playground, etc.)
- Sinks, diapering areas, refrigerator, cubbies, cribs, etc., including low sinks or step stools to encourage self-help skills in older infants

Self-Help Skills Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child shows increasing awareness of the body and its functions
 - > Uncomfortable when wet or soiled; may hide to have bowel movement
- Child shows increasing development of self-help skills and materials
 - Knows how various self-care items are used (toothbrush, towel, hairbrush/comb, etc.)
- · Child cooperates with care routines
 - Begins to dress self, brush teeth, etc., with assistance from adult

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Shows increasing independence in dressing, brushing teeth, bathing, toileting, eating, etc.
- Begins toilet training process
- Picks out clothes to wear; may have favorites
- Tries to do things independently (wipes nose with tissue, washes and dries hands independently

The Adult

- · Encourages the child's independence in learning self-help skills
- Accepts messiness and accidents as part of the learning process
- Makes care routines an enjoyable experience
- · Works with families to coordinate timing and process for toilet training
- Reinforces healthy practices such as brushing teeth or making healthy food choices

- Equipment and furnishings that promote health and safety for both children and staff (hand rails, cabinet locks, outlet covers, fenced playground, etc.)
- Appropriate furnishings to encourage development of self-help skills (steps to sink or toilet, coat hooks and cubbies at child's level, etc.)

Resources

Active Start: A Statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years-National Association for Sports and Physical Education

Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents-American Academy of Pediatrics

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition -- Mary Story

Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs -- American Academy of Pediatrics

Creative Resources for Infants and Toddlers -- Judy Herr and Teri Swim

Outdoor Play Everyday: Innovative Play Concepts for Early Childhood -- Karyn Wellhousen

Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children -- American Academy of Pediatrics

Books for Children

Busy Toes -- C.W. Bowie

Can't You Sleep, Little Bear? -- Martin Waddell

Each Peach Pear Plum -- Janet Alhberg and Allan Ahlberg

Baby Faces: Eat! -- Roberta Grobel Intrater

Fingers, Nose and Toes -- John Pinderhughes

The Foot Book -- Dr. Seuss

Jamberry -- Bruce Degen

Good Night, Baby -- Cheryl Willis Hudson

Growing -- Fiona Pragoff

How a Baby Grows -- Nola Buck

Time for Bed -- Mem Fox

The Wheels On The Bus -- Raffi

Where Is Baby's Belly Button? -- Karen Katz