

# Balance

## Benefits include

- \* Children's balance or Vestibular Systems develop before birth until adulthood
- \* Our Vestibular System is stimulated by movements like spinning slowly, rocking and rolling
- \* Balance sense organs are located in your inner ear; cilia (tiny hairs) move, relaying constant positioning to the rest of the body
- \* Good balance is supported by strong back and tummy muscles
- \* Vision and muscular development are enhanced by vestibular movements
- \* Fidgety children can have poorly developed Vestibular Systems
- \* Language and emotional control is enhanced by vestibular movement



Find out more

[www.sportbop.co.nz/young-people/  
early-childhood/move-laugh-grow/](http://www.sportbop.co.nz/young-people/early-childhood/move-laugh-grow/)

# Balance

## Activity



- \* *Knee ride games like humpty dumpty are great fun! Or sit on a chair with your toddler on your ankles and bounce up and down*
- \* *Hold baby under her armpits. Lift her into a straight up and down position off the ground*
- \* *Gently and slowly lean to the left and right, forwards and backwards. Only repeat a maximum of five times. If baby's head, legs and arms flop down; she is not ready for this activity, wait until she is older*
- \* *Lay baby on his back and gently raise his leg (not too high). Hold the other leg down and cross lifted leg over the leg on the floor to the other side and roll*
- \* *Hold baby on a swiss ball on her tummy, supporting her torso, gently roll backwards and forwards*
- \* *Gently roll baby down a raised surface (e.g. mattress raised one end on pillow) roll both ways!*
- \* *Older children can roll down hills or roll from one side of the room to another like a pencil*



\* *Lie on your back with your child face down on top of you, cuddle her and rock slowly from side to side*

\* *Older children need plenty of opportunity to hang, climb and swing; using monkey bars, swings and climbing ladders at the playground. Walk along cracks in the footpath or help your child walk on low walls like a balance beam. Ropes can be used for swings or tug of war*

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# Crawling

## Benefits include

- ✦ *Helps develop the brain; it gets the two sides of the brain talking to each other*
- ✦ *Helps breakdown the midline; the imaginary line that separates the left side of the body from right*
- ✦ *It's the first time children use opposite arm, leg movements*
- ✦ *Creates pathways in the brain that assist with cognitive processes like reading and writing*
- ✦ *Mobility, upper body strength and balance are all helped by crawling*
- ✦ *Develops independence, exploration and understanding of body size*
- ✦ *Crawling helps develop vision and hand-eye coordination*
- ✦ *An average baby spends approximately 400 hours crawling*



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Early Years Movement Programme An initiative of Sport Bay of Plenty

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# Crawling

## Activity



- \* *Place baby on his tummy every day when he is awake; little and often is best, anything from 10 seconds to 10 minutes if he is enjoying himself. Make sure it is happy time, when upset, move positions again*
- \* *Use plenty of touch on your baby's hands and feet, rub baby's hands with cotton wool, silk, fur, warm and cold flannels and so on*
- \* *Place toys just out of reach to encourage baby to crawl forward*
- \* *Make a series of tunnels out of cardboard boxes; large and small to crawl through*
- \* *Sing songs about animals; adult and child crawl around the floor making animal noises*
- \* *Play crawling tag or hide and seek; make tunnels out of your body or chairs for baby to crawl through*
- \* *Crawl on a variety of textures/surfaces; grass and sand. Up and down hills*



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# Floor Time

## Benefits include

- \* *Squirming, rolling, sitting and crawling are vital for developing our brain and body*
- \* *Awake tummy time strengthens muscles needed for moving and exploring; it encourages upper body strength and leads to crawling*
- \* *Baby's pincer grip is developed as babies reach and stretch*
- \* *Rolling helps infants develop balance, strength and their vision*
- \* *Babies need to be able to do these movements freely on the floor*
- \* *All children benefit from doing these movements*



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# Floor Time

## Activity



- \* *Lie on your back with baby facing you on your tummy; in the first year, babies learn most through the sense of touch and daily skin to skin contact also promotes growth*
- \* *On your back; bend your knees up so your thighs are on your tummy and lay baby on your legs while supporting baby's torso, lift him up and down gently with your legs*
- \* *Read a book while she is on her tummy on the floor*
- \* *Touch or stroke your child with your hand or a soft toy, talk to him about what you are doing – “This is so soft. Can you feel it on your cheek?”*
- \* *Roll a ball backwards and forwards or blow bubbles while baby is on the floor*
- \* *Lie baby in front of a mirror or goldfish bowl*
- \* *Play finger or toe games – Incy wincy spider, this little piggy and so on*
- \* *Encourage your baby to reach for toys hung above him. Time spent without a nappy on encourages leg kicking*



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# Language

## Benefits include

- \* *The more we talk with children, the more their language is enhanced, the more they will understand*
- \* *The optimum learning time for language is in the first 3 years of life*
- \* *Children who have extensive experience of being talked to before and after birth have an advantage over those who don't*
- \* *Language acquisition is partially instinctive and partly learned as children interact with people and their environment*
- \* *Children learn receptive language (understanding what is said) before they learn expressive language (speaking)*
- \* *Many children simply parrot when they first learn to talk; only once they have experienced language with the item, is full understanding made*



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# Language

## Activity



- \* *The more we talk to children, the more their language is enhanced. The more you talk about what you are doing, the better the understanding. When you are being active, talk about what is happening, what body parts are being used and what direction your child is going in*
- \* *When your child is in the pram or highchair, make sure she faces you so she can hear what you are chatting about and watch what you are doing*
- \* *Sing songs about the body, naming and touching the parts as you go. When getting your child dressed, talk about the body parts being covered*
- \* *Collect things from the garden or park, leaves, flowers, twigs etc. Have a textile treasure box, talk about how the different surfaces feel*
- \* *Set up an obstacle course and talk about going over, under, through, in or out*
- \* *Have pretend telephone conversations; great for developing conversation and enhances imagination and role play*
- \* *Count the number of puddles you can jump in, or the paving stones hopped. Make a trail of stones and count them. Count letter boxes, how many raisins are on a plate or apples in the fridge?*
- \* *Talk to your child but also let him talk to you; stop and listen, even if it is only baby babble! Always try and answer questions fully. Have family meals and include everyone in the conversation*



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# Vision

## Benefits include

- \* *The greatest development of eyes takes place in the first year of life*
- \* *Our eyes work together but see images separately. It's important to develop control so similar images are sent to the brain*
- \* *Good eye muscle control keeps the eyes straight during movement*
- \* *When our eyes are controlled without effort, our attention is available for visual concentration like reading or participating in games*
- \* *To read, a child's eyes need to be able to move together across the page; this is called eye tracking*
- \* *There is a difference between sight and vision; sight is the ability to see clearly while vision is understanding what is seen*



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# Vision

## Activity



- \* *Roll cars and balls across the floor when baby is lying on her tummy to encourage her to follow the movement with her eyes*
- \* *Sit on the floor with your child, pass the ball by rolling to to him and encourage him to push it back or you could roll the ball and chase it together. Roll the ball through hoops and tunnels*
- \* *Float feathers down onto baby when he is face up on the floor. This is a lovely tactile experience. Feathers are great for older children to throw up into the air and catch; can you catch them on your head, ankle, nose etc?*
- \* *Bubbles are great for eye tracking and fun to chase and catch too!*
- \* *Tie a balloon in a doorway, babies can bat at it with their hands and older children can either use a bat (rolled up newspaper) or practice kicking it. Play balloon or beach volleyball*
- \* *Spin slowly on merry go rounds and swings, play skittles*
- \* *When reading stories, point to the different things in pictures; this encourages his eyes to move*
- \* *With older children tell make believe stories or use books without pictures so he has to imagine the characters*



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