

Babies need brain-body coordination

Question: My baby is not as coordinated in motor skills as the other babies in his play group. Could there be something wrong and what can I do?

Answer: Babies develop at very different speeds regarding motor skill development. Your baby is most likely fine, but there are definite means in which you can encourage and help develop these skills for your child. An article in *USA Today* discussed the guidelines issued by the National Association for Sport and Physical Activity concerning activity as a key factor in babies motor skill development. In summary, they said that targeted daily activities are the building block for babies and toddlers for future tasks including walking, running, and playing.

We can't assume skills such as rolling, sitting, and walking will just come naturally as babies grow. There is a brain-body connection that needs to be stimulated. The study recommended the following guidelines:

- Part of an infant's day should be spent in structured activity.
- Don't keep infants/toddlers in baby seats or other restrictive settings for a long time.
- Toddlers should accumulate at least 30 minutes of structured physical activity, and preschoolers at least an hour, each day.
- Toddlers and preschoolers should spend an hour or more a day in free play.
- Toddlers and preschoolers should not be sedentary for more than an hour at a time except when sleeping.

The guidelines imply that TV time for our future generation needs to be minimized and interactive organized and free play expression time maximized. I am totally supportive of these guidelines.

Your initial formation of active organized motor skills with your baby will reap big rewards as your child gets older and more independent. Besides better coordination, your child will be more active and have a less chance of being overweight. Obesity in our children is in epidemic proportion. Starting children with brain-body functions will prevent future sedentary inactivity. Should your child continue to show signs of being slow at motor skills, appropriate child-care physicians can test him.

Quote of the week: *“The only difference between adults and children is the size of their sandbox.”* – Anonymous