

## Learning through play goes a long way!



### Why play is important?

**Play is one of the most important ways your child will begin to build on their skills.**

Many research studies have shown that children who learn through play benefit in strengthening their overall physical health, emotional well-being as well as in their social relationships with others. Playing helps children learn to read, write and perform better when they reach their schooling years.

### Healthier Children

**Research points to a direct relationship between play and stress reduction as well as decreased risk of heart disease.**

When a child plays with their parents or caregivers they are giving their bodies fuel for physical success. A child is less likely to experience childhood obesity and is more likely to choose physical play to reduce stress levels. Physical play such as skipping, playing ball or even tummy time for infants are all examples of healthy, physical play!

### Pure Imagination

“Make-believe” play is important in helping children understand and respond to different situations. Their sense of curiosity and creativity grows when they pretend to play with dolls, stuffed animals or even invite you to join them for a pretend cup of tea and biscuits! Not only are children who imaginatively play working on noticing other people’s feelings, they are finding ways to understand and manage their own. **Children as young as 3 years old begin to better understand the world around them through realistic pretend play.** Want to help your child learn animal sounds? Make believe you are zebras, monkeys and lions at the zoo!

### Did you know?

Children who play with their parents will have higher social and emotional skills! *We all learn when we have fun!*

### Prenatal Play

Did you know that some research has shared that a baby starts to learn inside the womb as early as *15 weeks gestation*? This is one of the best times for parents to begin to play with their baby, even while they are still growing in mom’s belly! Prenatal bonding activities such as reading out loud, singing, playing music or counting your baby’s kicks *support the relationship you will share.*

### Dad’s Corner

Hey, Dads! You are making a big impact on your child’s life when you learn to play with them. Your role in their playtime will support their ability to problem solve and develop strong relationships with others! You are also making memories with them they will always look back on.

**Remember how important you are!**

# Recipes to Play

**Parents are a child's first and best partner in play!**

**Here are some suggestions of what you can do together!**

## Prenatally

- \* Touch your belly as baby kicks
- \* Hold a flashlight to your belly and feel baby follow it
- \* Place headphones on your stomach and play music as baby dances inside!
- \* Read a story out loud. *Baby will recognize your voice!*

## Toddler/ Preschool

- \* Crawl around on the floor together. *This makes their large muscles strong!*
- \* Practice walking while your child holds your fingers. *They will work on those important first steps!*
- \* Read and turn pages of a book together. *They want to help!*
- \* Build a tower of small or large blocks together. *This strengthens their smaller muscles and problem solving skills!*
- \* Sing nursery rhymes and practice simple finger plays such as "twinkle, twinkle little star" or "pat-a-cake". *Children who do this learn language and how to read faster than others!*
- \* Practice feeding, changing, dressing and playing with baby dolls. *Healthy personal and social skills will grow!*

## Infant

- \* Look at black and white shapes and pictures together. *Babies respond to these most in the beginning!*
- \* Explore soothing scents on a cotton ball 3-4 inches away from baby's nose. *This helps build their sense of smell!*
- \* Borrow sensory books for your local library and help baby feel the things inside! ***Ask your home visitor where to find a library near you!***
- \* Try some simple massage or yoga moves while listening to soft or classical music. *Baby will understand their body better as well as show their response to sounds!*
- \* Breastfeed your baby. It's *healthy nutrition for them as well as a way to spend quality time together!*

## Child

- \* Go on a scavenger hunt outside or around the house and find colorful items!
- \* Play a simple board or card game together. *This helps them learn to take turns!*
- \* Create cut outs of letters, shapes and numbers using child safe scissors and hang them up around the house and play "I Spy". *This will support success with school!*