



Tuesday

# Healthy Body, Happy Me 2024

## Play with me



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## Play with me

“Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child’s soul.”

**Friedrich Froebel (1782 – 1852),  
Froebel Trust**

Children have a natural, innate drive to play, seeking out playful experiences no matter where they are or what is available to them. Play allows children to explore, discover, be creative, think, learn and develop in ways that are meaningful to them.

All children learn through hands-on experiences, using all their senses, and need time and space to practice, repeat and apply their skills and knowledge. Repetition is key for progression. By physically and mentally doing things over again, children become more skilful and develop confidence to explore what else they can do, building on current knowledge and skills.

While children are born with a natural desire to explore and play, this is most successful when interested and skilful adults play alongside them and create opportunities to share and enhance play experiences. As they play, children demonstrate their interests and fascinations, enabling practitioners to know how to engage, motivate and extend their learning. Skilful practitioners observe how children play as well as what they are playing with. They will wait, watch and wonder as they observe dispositions for learning and reflect on the interests and interactions children are demonstrating to plan sensitive interactions and scaffold their play.

Indoor and outdoor environments are essential to play – they should be dynamic, flexible, versatile places which inspire creative thinking, problem solving, risk taking, curiosity, exploration, adventure and innovation, with resources to support each child’s developmental needs.



*Play and learn with friends*



## Activity 1 More bubbles!

For babies and children who are highly motivated by bubbles, this activity is great to encourage joint attention and communication for a shared experience.

### Activity outline

An adult blows bubbles near to the child or children until they become engaged by the experience. Encourage the child/ren to say or sign 'pop' and 'bubble'.

After a while, pause blowing bubbles and wait for the child/ren to indicate that they want more - by touch, gesture, sign, sounds or words, according to how they choose to communicate. Once the adult notices the request, resume blowing. Repeat several times then place the bubble bottle in a clear box, preferably out of reach. Some children may respond to a red X card to indicate that the activity is finished.

Later, children may see the bubble bottle in the box and indicate that they would like the bubble blowing activity again, such as by pointing or pulling an adult to the box or vocalising their request.

You may provide an image of the bubble bottle which a child gives to an adult to indicate their request.



### Resources

- Bubble mixture, wand
- Clear plastic box
- Card with red X (optional).

### Top tips

Always try to respond to requests to share the bubble blowing, especially those made by children who find communication and joint attention tricky, so that they link actions with positive results – even if it's just for a couple of minutes.

If it isn't convenient for the bubbles to be used, try sticking a red X card to the box to indicate that the activity is not available – always remember to remove it afterwards.



Give it a go



Catch the bubbles



Pop!



## Activity 2 Beyond the roar and stomp

Dinosaur small world play areas often attract children, but once they have made the dinosaurs stomp and they've had a roar and maybe a fight, what do they do next? If you have observed limited dinosaur small world play, here are some ideas for how to engage children's imagination so that their play becomes more complex and meaningful, offers greater opportunity for vocabulary development and encourages social communication.



### Activity outline

Provide images and names of dinosaurs to reflect the figures available for children and staff to learn their names. Research where they live (forest, grassland, water) and what they eat (meat or vegetation) so that the children can create suitable habitats and also understand typical habits. For example, a herbivore such as the brachiosaurus will not fight, while an allosaurus would attack a stegosaurus and the tiny microraptor may need a cave to hide in.

Encourage the children to use different voice sounds to represent the dinosaurs – larger ones may have deep voices while smaller ones might be squeaky.

Support the children to imagine situations where they may need to help each other, such as to make a safe nest for their eggs, or solve problems, such as reaching the juiciest leaves from the top of a tall tree.

Provide figures of dinosaur species in different sizes, so children are able to imagine and recreate the familiar family roles of parent and child, which will naturally include the rhythm of the day, such as bedtimes and mealtimes.



### Resources

- Tuff tray, or similar
- Resources to create habitats, e.g. artificial grass, fabric, small world trees, flowers etc, pebbles, small rocks
- Dinosaur figures (various species and sizes), images, books or other resources for researching names, habitats, diet etc.



Create your own world



Roar!





## Activity 3 Open wide

Role play enables children to take part in real life experiences. It provides opportunities for children to develop their vocabulary, imagination, problem solving skills, cooperation and collaboration as they negotiate the rules and roles of their play. Through role play children express their feelings and emotions as they navigate new experiences in a safe environment.

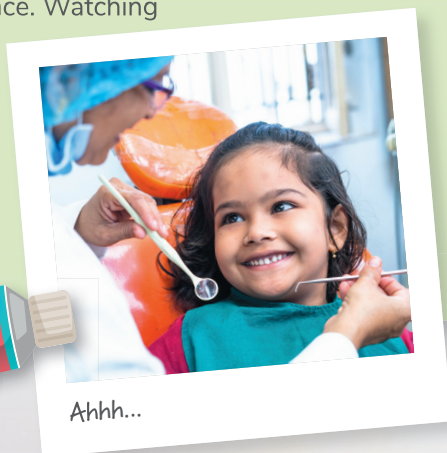
### Activity outline

Develop children's understanding of oral health through a role play area dedicated to the dentist.

Many children will already have visited a dentist and can build on this previous experience in their play. Other children may never have visited a dentist practice or may have parents who are fearful of visiting a dentist, so a role play area will enable them to explore a range of experiences they may encounter on a dentist visit, helping to build their self-confidence about the experience. Watching a video of going to the dentist will also help.

Encourage children to help with the resources.

Involve adults in the play to model conversation and share oral health information, where appropriate.



### Resources

- Signs e.g. name of the dental practice, waiting area, posters for healthy teeth etc.
- Baskets and trays for the dentists' tools, masks, gloves, dentist's chair, mirrors
- Reception desk with telephone, appointments book
- Chairs for the waiting area.

### Top tip

Invite a dentist or hygienist into your setting to talk to children about brushing their teeth.

Contact local dentists to ask for old or surplus equipment, posters and leaflets to add to your role play area.

## Activity 4 Risky play

Risky play is not about offering hazardous activities, it just requires opportunities for children to challenge themselves on different levels:

- Physically - by climbing a little higher, running a little faster, jumping a little further
- Emotionally - feeling out of control or overcoming fear
- Mentally - learning to get out of trouble, learning your own boundaries and those of the environment around you.

Engaging in risky play creates opportunities to develop resilience, problem solving, creativity, imagination, confidence and build positive self-esteem. Creating a positive approach to risk is essential. While children may experience risk in a variety of situations, the outdoor environment lends itself to challenge and risk.

### Activity outline

Encourage children to try new things, to see how far they can go, and give them positive encouragement to show you trust their skills to cope with the challenges.

Be on hand to support, but allow them time to think through what they can do for themselves, such as walking across a wooden plank unaided.

Introduce objects that need to be transported from one place to another using only balance beams to move across the space.

Invite children to use the resources to create their own structures and challenges.

### Ideas for non-mobile babies:

Provide different textures to explore, such as long grass, bark and smooth surfaces. Introduce challenge for mobile babies to negotiate uneven ground, slopes and inclines, exploring surfaces during different weather.

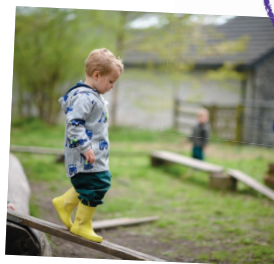


### Resources

- Use your available resources to create ramps, tunnels and inclines for children to balance and climb.



Climbing high



Defying laws of physics



Balancing act



Navigating outdoor environments





Further resources, links and stories:

Oral Health Advice - DfE

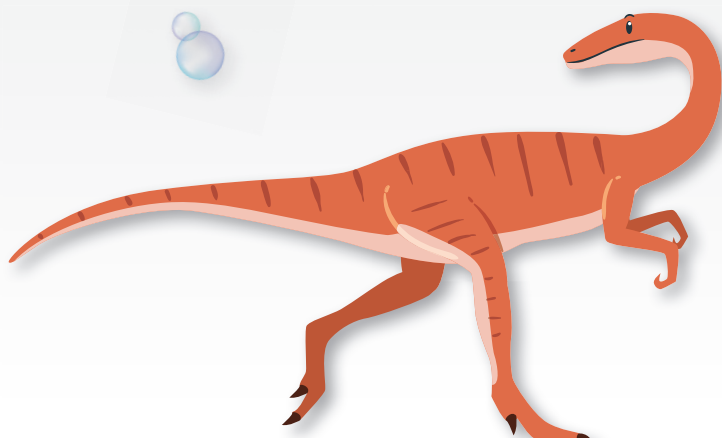
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## National Day Nurseries Association

At NDNA, we don't just provide nursery membership, lobby government and offer training, we are dedicated to making a difference. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours. We enhance, support, nurture, cherish and challenge.

Every year we run an annual Healthy Body, Happy Me campaign to encourage better health and happiness by giving nurseries FREE resources for play, learning and fun.

Get involved with our 2024 campaign and help keep your children happy and healthy.

**Important: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**



### National Day Nurseries Association

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#HealthyBodyHappyMe

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