

Body Awareness – Under 5's



What is it? Body awareness is the ability to know where your body is in space, and what it is doing without having to rely upon vision.

Why is it important? This then enables to help plan and coordinate our movements effectively (motor planning) in conjunction with our other senses to perform activities of daily living. A reduced sense of body awareness can result in poor coordination, using too much or too little force to complete activities, e.g. lifting a cup without spilling the contents, appropriate force of grip on pencil.

How you can help? Doing activities that encourage pushing and pulling / resistive activities to help give the body lots of feedback to the body about what it is doing. Using a mirror and other games are also important to develop body awareness. The following are some activity ideas to help develop body awareness (you may need to give hands on support to help show your child how to do some of the activities)

- ☺ **Playdough activities** – rolling, squashing in hands, pinching
- ☺ **Cooking Activities** – helping to stir cake mixture, rolling out cookie dough, using a cookie cutter
- ☺ **Pulling, pushing and lifting**, e.g. opening moderately heavy doors, pull a toy in a wagon or tied up in a sheet
- ☺ **Help** with household chores, e.g. carry the shopping, vacuum clean, wipe table, mop the floor.
- ☺ **Digging** in sand, gravel or soil.
- ☺ **Stamping** feet, when walking along, try foot stamping on different surfaces, i.e. gravel, tarmac etc.
- ☺ **Play hand clapping games** with friends or family
- ☺ **Very firm massage** on both sides of arms and legs as well as back (but NOT on the tummy)
- ☺ **Firm towelling/rub down** after bath, then wrap child tightly in towel
- ☺ **Trampolining** – Jump 3x then 'crash', jump 3x then 'crash' (do 10x)
- ☺ **Tug of war** - pulling bed sheet, tie to a fixed object or between two people
- ☺ **Wheelbarrow walking** – walking on hands whilst someone holds your legs (you may need to start by holding them at the pelvis and having their legs around your body for extra support)
- ☺ **Pillow fights**- hit on body, arms and legs; not head
- ☺ **Squatting** without using hand support. Try getting up and back down again without using hands.
- ☺ **Bouncing** backwards and forwards on a space hopper.
- ☺ **Climbing** – ladders, ramps, trees, monkey bars etc
- ☺ **Rough and tumble play** with friends
- ☺ **Obstacle courses** – make up your own going over, under, through and on top of objects. Go around the obstacle course in different ways (forwards, backwards, sideways, tiptoes, crawling, etc)



Non Resistive Activities:

- ☺ Stand in front of a mirror so that the child can see their body. Let them touch body parts and name them
- ☺ Face puzzle games. Later make a puzzle of the whole person and have the child put it together, naming and feeling the parts.
- ☺ Use worksheets containing drawings of people with missing features. Ask the child which parts are missing, then complete the drawing.
- ☺ In front of a mirror, ask the child to stand tall (arms above head), stand small (crouch down), stand wide (arms at sides), stand narrow (arms hugging himself), stand happy, sad, angry, excited, tired, etc.
- ☺ Make up fun activities like 'Simon Says' to practice body awareness and image. Be sure to incorporate verbal skills along with pointing and touching.