

South Peace Child Development Centre

Babies and Standing Equipment: what to avoid

- Babies develop from the head down, this means that we encourage strengthening of the neck muscles initially, then the trunk/tummy muscles before lastly encouraging strengthening of the legs. Encouraging development from the head down helps to prepare babies for important gross motor skills such as sitting, crawling and walking.
- Standing equipment such as Jolly Jumpers, Exersaucers and walkers reverse the optimal process of development; they encourage babies to use and strengthen their leg muscles before they may actually be ready. They also often encourage babies to stand on their tip toes.



- Many babies present with imbalances between their extensor muscles (those that work to straighten and arch their backs) and their flexor/core muscles (those that work to curl their body inwards). These babies often overuse their extensor muscles as they "love being in standing" and appear "very strong"; when placed in standing they may push up onto their toes and lock out their knees. Unfortunately this overuse of extensor muscle tone is not the same as controlled muscle strength and can form strong patterns that are very difficult for your baby to break when they start to stand independently.
- Some people believe that by placing their babies in standing equipment it will help to advance their gross motor skills. Unfortunately this is not true; studies have shown that infants who have spent a lot of time in equipment actually score lower on infant motor development testing and may be delayed in important skills such as moving from one position to another.

Helpful Hints

- We know that at times you may need something to help keep your baby busy, if used sparingly and under supervision Exersaucers can be great fun! A FEW minutes each day will not harm your baby. Babies should only be placed in an Exersaucer if they have good head and upper body strength and are able to maintain their feet flat on the floor. If your baby is arching his/her back, pushing their legs straight or pushing up onto their toes, then please discontinue use of the equipment.
- Use of Jolly Jumpers is **NOT** recommended as they encourage babies to push their legs straight and bounce on their toes, they also promote straightening and arching of the back.
- Infant walkers are also NOT recommended as they are not sold in Canada due to serious injuries associated with them.
- Please limit the amount of time you place your baby in supported standing positions as this encourages many of the same patterns as the various pieces of equipment.

What to do instead

- Please remember that babies do not require equipment for their development; by limiting the amount of time infants spend in equipment we are allowing them chances to develop their muscles, skills and body awareness through floor time.
- Provide frequent opportunities for floor play, while your baby is playing encourage them spend time in different positions including their tummy and their sides



- Help your baby roll on and off his/her tummy
- Support your baby so he/she is able to sit on the floor or on your lap
- Remember to interact with your baby - sing, talk and play with them while making eye contact