

From our February, 2011 Newsletter

## Winter Activities

With winter hitting us full force this year, you - and your kids - may be starting to feel like you are all going a little stir crazy from so many hours indoors. Here are some fabulous ideas from the therapists at Pediatric Potentials to beat those winter blues:



Director Laurie Kalb suggests you treat your child to a **swim party - in the bathtub!** Have them put on a bathing suit and goggles, fill the tub with squirt toys, add foam soap, and have a sensory blast! Blowing and catching bubbles in the bath is a great way to improve eye hand coordination and reinforce motor skills.



You can also have a **waterless swim party** in a pillow pool. Inflate a rubber pool (or haul the plastic pool out of the garage), put a comforter on the bottom, fill with pillows, and let the jumping begin.

Winter often makes us all sedentary, so crank up the tunes and **MOVE! Dance** around the house. With younger kids, take out pots and pans and some wooden spoons, and **improvise a marching band**. A game of **Twister** or **musical chairs** are other activities that get kids moving and are always fun.

The colder weather outdoors offers a good excuse for **good old-fashioned indoor play time**. *We sometimes forget that play is essential to learning for children, as they develop social skills, the ability to solve problems and the courage to express their ideas.* Let kids **have a tactile experience** by filling a large box (placed on the kitchen or craft table for easy cleanup) with sand, rice, packing peanuts, cornstarch, dirt or dried macaroni. Then let them dig and pour, using spoons, measuring cups and the like. Stuffed or plastic animals can be used to **create a zoo or farm**, as your child engages in play that builds vocabulary, social skills and creative thinking. Simple **board games** are great for family play, and terrific for problem solving and elementary math such as counting spaces and adding dice.

Or appeal to your child's artistic side. Indoor time is great for **painting, doing clay, and making collages and sculptures** from materials you have around the house. **Create an art gallery** of their best work on a clothesline strung high across your playroom or their bedroom. They can create invitations for Grandma or their friends to come to the gallery opening (don't forget to serve Shirley Temples)! Another fun activity is to let them **redecorate a door or a large poster or sheet** and change the look of their room. They may also enjoy having **life size self-portraits** done: Trace their shape on brown paper, then let them glue on hair, color clothes and faces, paste on buttons, etc.



And then there's the most delicious indoor activity for kids: **cooking and baking!** Whether it's cookies, brownies, cupcakes or lunch, kids love to measure, pour, crack eggs, and stir batter. Slice and bake cookies work, too, as do even store-bought frosted cupcakes since kids love to decorate them. Use colored icing on sugar cookies. Make faces with m&ms or colored cereals. For a healthier, no bake alternative, stuff celery with peanut butter or cream cheese and top with raisins ("three men in a boat"), or make English muffin pizzas with sauce, shredded mozzarella and their favorite toppings. Yum!