



From our June 2013 Newsletter

Great Ways to Increase Your Child's Outdoor Activity This Summer

OT's love summer. The warm weather provides great opportunities for gross motor activities, use of tactile media like sand and water, and summer arts and crafts.

These great ideas below will help develop your child's strength, body awareness, coordination and dexterity.

Water Play:

- **Swimming** is a great form of exercise but also a fun way to develop coordination between the right and left sides of the body, increase core strength, promote body awareness (as it stimulates the sensory receptors in joints and muscles), and provide sensory stimulation from the weight of the water.

Other water activities are great in the summer since there's less clean-up required outdoors!

- Let your child **water plants**, carry buckets of water to dump into pools or water tables, or **throw water balloons** at a target.
- **Pop bubbles** while on a swing or trampoline to promote visual tracking skills.
- Squeeze water out of sponges or Nerf balls.
- Step on bubbles while walking on a line (such as a balance beam or rope) to develop balance.
- Promote hand strength and coordination by "painting" on a building or sidewalk with water using large house paint brushes

or sponge edgers, scooping up toys from a basin using a small net, or squeezing the lever on a plant mister.

- Play catch with water balloons.

Tactile Activities

Children develop body awareness and coordination from exposure to different textures such as grass, pebbles, and sand.

- Have your child roll down a hill, slither through the grass like a snake, or jump like a frog.
- Bury small toys in the sand on the beach and have your child dig them out with a small shovel.
- Having your child squat while digging will improve balance and leg muscle strength.
- Write letters or words in wet or dry sand.
- Bury their feet or legs in the sand; let them bury you next. Deep pressure is a great body organizer.

Summer Arts and Crafts

- Help your child practice cutting, gluing, folding and taping (by cutting out red, and white "stripes" and a blue rectangular field for a flag; glue on white stars using sticker stars).
- Develop hand strength by painting plant pots with a brush. Bonus activity: fill painted pots with dirt and plant flowers or vegetables in them. See our Gardening article on the right side of the newsletter for information on the sensory value of this activity.

Outdoor activities

- Hopscotch is always a great physical activity to practice jumping, bilateral coordination, motor planning and balancing on one foot while hopping.

- Play catch with a different sized balls, like beach balls and tennis balls. Even better, try water balloons. Practice dribbling a ball with your feet - use a beach ball or balloon for easier control to start.
- Visit a local playground and explore all the climbing equipment, swings and slides. Supervise and assist your child as necessary. Let them move at their own pace, but know that sometimes all they may need are some verbal reminders of how to use the equipment ("try putting your foot on the next rung of the ladder").