



THE DIRT PILE

Fun and messy ideas to help your toddler explore

Rainbow Spaghetti Sensory Tub

Spring is finally here! Time for some sensory play that's colorful and fun! Cooked noodles are a great texture activity that is inexpensive, quick and easy!

Supplies:

Food coloring (liquid or gel)
About 1 tablespoon of cooking oil
1 pound spaghetti

How to make colored spaghetti:

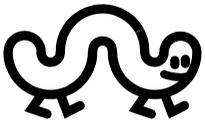
1. Cook the spaghetti and then drain and rinse with cold water for several minutes.
2. Coat the noodles with cooking oil to prevent it from becoming too sticky.
3. Divide the cooked spaghetti into separate containers – one container for each color that you are making.
4. Add a few drops of food coloring to each container and mix. Allow to dry 10-15 minutes to prevent hands being stained.
5. Place the pasta into a container for play.

When first placed into a large container or plastic bin, the colors can be placed in separate piles to create a pretty display. As the children play, they'll get to see the beauty of the colors mixing. Throw in some kitchen gadgets such as tongs, spoons, cups and bowls. These simple additions can foster a child's creativity, encouraging pretend play, as well as allowing them to practice their hand skills such as scooping, pouring and grasping. Have fun and be creative! Play restau-

rant pretending to serve up "Today's Special"! Hide small toys or plastic eggs in it for a treasure hunt! A *Frozen* fan may enjoy dark blue and purple "Elsa" pasta! A child who likes dump trucks may like hauling loads of colored pasta!

For some children, touching messy textures may be difficult. Offering a tool such as a large spaghetti spoon to touch it with first may help children to get used to the texture. Also, watching a parent or another child play in it first can be helpful. Having a wet washcloth/baby wipe nearby to wipe sticky fingers during play may give the child comfort. If a child doesn't want to touch it, perhaps they will play with it in a plastic baggie that closes securely. It's important to allow them time to get used to the texture at their own pace so that it will be a fun experience.





WIGGLE WORMS

Helping babies with torticollis be “wiggle worms”

Spring is the time of year when the sunshine and warm weather draw children outside to play.

Even babies enjoy the fresh air and stimulation of being outside. However, babies with torticollis have a different experience than typical babies. Torticollis is a condition that occurs when the neck is twisted and often turned to one side. Congenital muscular torticollis is the most common type of torticollis and is due to asymmetrical length and/or strength of the muscles on the side of the neck. Some babies are born with torticollis while others acquire the condition. Since the Back to Sleep Campaign, there has been a significant rise in plagiocephaly (abnormal head shape) and torticollis. Babies with torticollis don't have the opportunity to be “wiggle worms” like typical babies. They are often are “stuck” in patterns that can cause secondary problems and delays.

Here are a few things to look for that may indicate torticollis:

- Only tilts head to one side (ear to shoulder)
- Only rotates/turns head to one side
- Plagiocephaly (abnormal head shape)
- Feeding problems (mouth, tongue and jaw may fall or pull to one side, milk often leaks)
- Only visually looks to one side
- Shoulder hiking (appears to have no neck)
- Facial asymmetries (misalignment of the eyes, ears and jaw)
- Persistent positional preference of the head
- Only sucks or reaches with one hand
- Only rolls, transitions or crawls using one side

Here are a few preventive ideas:

- Provide tummy time throughout the day when your baby is awake.
- Change the position of your baby's head to avoid flattening when sleeping on their back.
- Avoid overuse of containers (car seats, swings).
- Feed your baby on both sides.
- Encourage your baby to turn his head and reach for you and toys to both sides.
- Carry and hold your baby on both sides.

Early diagnosis of torticollis and referral to Early Intervention for physical therapy services can result in complete correction of torticollis and atypical head shape and prevent the need for a helmet, surgery and long-term complications. A physical therapist will provide an appropriate positioning and stretching program, specific handling ideas and ways to promote symmetrical motor development.

So enjoy the spring and allow your baby to get out there and wiggle.



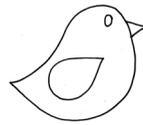
BUSY BEES

Crafty ideas to keep your bees busy

HOW A ROLL OF TAPE CAN LEAD TO HOURS OF FUN!

A simple roll of painters tape can create all kinds of fun activities on a rainy spring day! Here are just a few ideas:

1. Put lines of tape on the floor and have your toddler try to walk on the lines – make some straight, some wavy and some at angles for more of a challenge. Older toddlers can try to jump with two feet over the tape lines!
2. Put lines of tape on paper and have your toddler paint the page. When its dry, pull of the tape and see the new picture!
3. Put tape shapes on a window or mirror – have your child pull off the shapes one at a time- “pull off the circle, pull off the triangle, etc.” You can do this with letters and numbers too!
4. Give your child different lengths of tape and let them make a design on paper.
5. Make a tape “fence” to keep in toy animals!



THE EARLY BIRD

Local activities both you and your child will love!

4/4: Wild About Animals Event from 10a-3p
PSU Ag Arena • Kids under 5 free

Fridays from 4/10-5/1: Mommy and Me Playgroup
from 10-11a at Hollidaysburg Area YMCA

4/12: Egg Hunt to Benefit Miracle Network at 2p
Baker Mansion • \$5 donation

4/18: Week of the Young Child Celebration from 11a-2p
Penn State Altoona Adler Gym • Come see the HNA booth to make a fun craft and enjoy other free activities!

4/19: Blair County Community Action Agency Easter Egg Hunt at Vets Field 24th St. & Maple Ave., Altoona Under 5 yrs at 10a, ages 6-9 at 11a • Free

4/25 Tyrone Fishing Derby from 8-11a at Reservoir Park

4/25 Healthy Kids Day from 10a-1p at Hollidaysburg Area YMCA

5/1: Bounce House Day from 10:30a-4:30p
Christ Community Church, Ellis Place, State College \$750 child/adult free

5/2: Port Matilda Fishing Derby from 8a-1p
Community Park

5/9: Frankstown Sportsman's Club Fishing Derby
8-11a and Noon-3p

Delgrosso Park Opening Day–Free rides from 11a-1p

Tyrone Family Fun Blast from 10a-2p at Tyrone Area High School

5/30: Delgrosso Park Children's Miracle Network Celebration Weekend • Free family entertainment

6/20: WPSU Kid's Day with Daniel Tiger from 11a-5p
at Delgrosso Park

6/21: Lakemont Park – Father's Day- Dads ride free!



MIRACLE GROW

Fun snack ideas
for spring

CANDY EGG NESTS

- 2 c. mini marshmallows
- 1/4 c. butter
- 4 c. chow mein noodles



1. Butter a 12-cup muffin tin.
2. Combine marshmallows and butter over medium heat in a saucepan; stir until butter and marshmallows have melted. Stir in chow mein noodles, coat well.
3. Butter fingers and press the mixture into the bottom and sides of the muffin tin. Refrigerate until firm. When firm, fill with chocolate eggs, peeps or jelly beans.

HEALTHY SPRING SNACK IDEAS FOR TODDLERS:

- White or red grapes (try freezing them for a change)
- Frozen blueberries on yogurt
- Baby carrots/hummus
- Melon on cottage cheese
- Sliced banana with peanut butter on a whole grain English muffin
- Celery sticks dipped in whipped cream cheese



MOCKING BIRDS

Make your little mocking birds sing!

How Reading with Your Child Helps Teach Language & Speech

All of the parenting books tell us to read to our children from birth on. But what can be gained from all of this time reading? The following skills can be achieved by reading to your child:

1. Reading helps kids learn to pay attention – When first “reading” books with babies, talk about the pictures and use books with something they can touch and feel to keep their attention.
2. Reading helps babies learn to share an experience. Talk about the story with your child, ask them questions about what they see and have them ask you questions about the pictures.
3. Reading helps children understand new words and follow simple directions – Babies need to understand what words mean before they can use those words. Asking children to point out pictures in books is a great way to help them learn what words mean. To begin with, help your child point by taking their hand and helping them point to what you asked.
4. Reading can be used to teach children how to play with toys purposefully. Pairing props that match the objects/characters in the books can be a great way to teach toddlers to “act out” a play scenario that is seen in a book.
5. Reading can help teach children to use early gestures such as pointing, waving and clapping. Imitate actions seen in books, wave bye-bye to the characters as you turn the page and clap when you make it to the end of the book!
6. Reading can teach imitation of early vocalizations and play sounds and repetition of familiar words – pairing sounds with animals and vehicles is a great early language activity! Model pointing to and naming objects and actions shown in the pictures. For books with short phrases per page, have your child repeat the phrases after your read them.

Best books for Babies: Cardboard or plastic books with simple, clear pictures or touch & feel books and one-two words on a page.

Best books for Toddlers: Books with short phrases and repetitive/rhyming phrases, lift the flap books and books with bright, colorful and engaging pictures.

The most important thing about reading with your child is to keep it fun!!