

To help your child walk...

- Encourage lots of **opportunities** for your child to be up on his/her feet. **Standing** can be done at furniture (i.e. coffee table, play table) or just on the floor supported by an adult. When standing, his/her shoulders should be over feet, and feet should be about shoulder-width apart. Provide supervision or physically support him/her if needed by placing your hands around his/her trunk. Note that standing in exersaucers and jolly jumpers do not allow for the same skill development. If these are used, it should be used for no more than 10 min at a time and only a few times per day.
- When standing at furniture, encourage lots of **squatting** (bending at the hips and knees) to pick objects up off the ground and then stand back up to play with the toy. You may need to initially offer the toy at knee height and then progress to having the toy on the ground.
- Encourage lots of **cruising** at furniture (walking sideways holding on) in both directions. As this skill progresses, encourage stepping between 2 surfaces, such as a sofa and ottoman. This is a great way for your child to develop trunk strength and balance skills.
- **Build** on the skills your child can do. This will develop their muscular strength, and their thinking and problem solving skills. Often we assume that once a child can do a skill they are an expert. This is not the case; once a skill is established, it takes time to get good at it. To become an expert it requires **repetition, variation, decreasing support, trial and error, and challenges**. To help him/her conquer the most basic skills first, set him/her up for success and then slowly change the variables to make it more challenging. Generally, skills build on one another so when he/she is strong enough, he/she will move on to the next skill. The above activities are good examples of the progression of skills a child needs to learn prior to moving on to the next.
- Discourage **"w" sitting** position as the main method that your child sits in. If "w" sitting is the only position your child sits in, it is potentially harmful to for their hip, knee and foot joints; and it does not allow for the development of trunk muscles needed for sturdy independent walking. Moreover, "w" sitting is commonly linked to parents' concern of in-toeing (legs turning in). Try to encourage cross legged sitting instead. Be persistent because this can be a hard habit to break!

