



NOVEMBER 2008



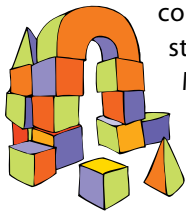
Family Time Work Time

A BALANCING ACT

Building Strong Families

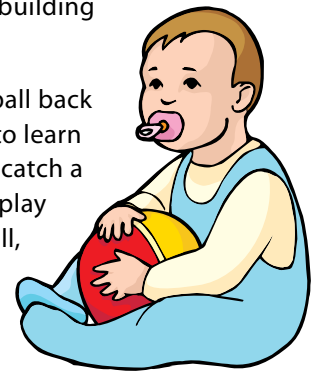
The Best Toys for Kids

Some of the best toys for kids have been around for a long time. They are simple, durable, fun, can help your child build skills, and can be enjoyed by kids of all ages. They are blocks, balls, and books.



Blocks are good toys for kids. Infants like to carry them around and dump them into and out of containers. Toddlers like to build towers. As children get older they like to build more elaborate structures with blocks. Children use physical skills as they lift and move blocks to build things. Math skills are used as children count, match, sort, add, subtract, and notice the weight and length of blocks. Thinking and problem solving skills are used when making a tower or other structure. A child can learn how to work with others and share ideas when building with blocks.

Balls are fun for everyone! Infants love to roll them. Toddlers enjoy rolling a ball back and forth to someone. This teaches them how to take turns, something toddlers need to learn that leads to being able to share. As a child gets older, she can learn how to throw and catch a ball. Children enjoy games with balls. Some children develop a love of sports and may play ball of one kind or another all their lives. Some ball games are kickball, baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, tennis, golf, and football.



Children learn so much from books. Infants and toddlers like to look at picture books and to listen to short stories.

Board books and cloth books are best for them to handle.

Preschoolers enjoy stories and learning about new things. There are books about science and nature. There are books about magic and music. There are fairy tale and folk tale books. There are books that show you how to do things or build things. Some books are about real things and others are fiction. Whatever your child likes, you can find books about it.

Have a special reading time with your child every day. Once he learns to read, take turns reading to each other. Take your child to the library and help him choose some books to take home and read. Are there traditional stories your family reads together every year for holidays you celebrate? These books can become family treasures. Make books and reading times important for your child.



Keeping Those Germs From Spreading

Keep those germs that fly around when you cough and sneeze from doing the least harm. Teach everyone in your family to give coughs and sneezes the "cold shoulder!" This means coughing or sneezing into a part of your sleeve that is the least likely to be in contact with someone else's hands, nose, or mouth. Cough or sneeze into your shoulder. When you are in a group of people, cough or sneeze away from the group, not into it.

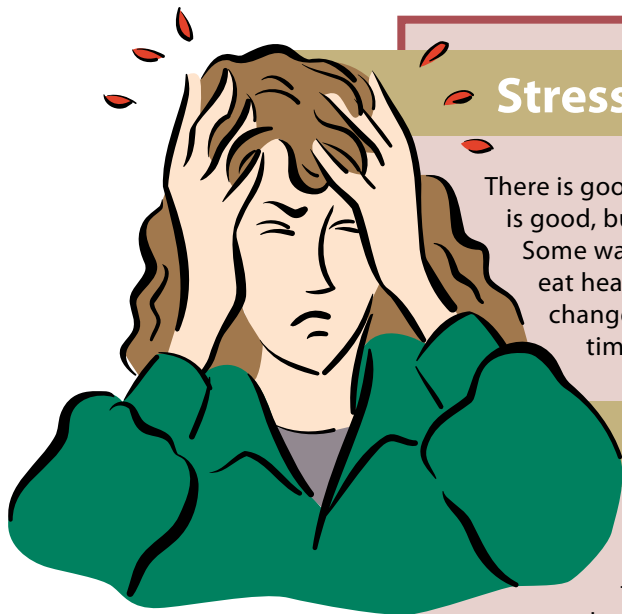
And Then There is Hand Washing

Frequent hand washing with soap and warm water is the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Teach your child how to wash his hands and make sure he does it often. Wash your own hands often to set a good example for your child to follow. Hands should be washed after coughing or sneezing, before and after handling food, after bathroom routines, wiping noses, handling a pet, playing outside, and messy projects.



What you need to do to wash hands thoroughly:

- Use soap and warm running water.
- Wash wrists, palms, back of hands, fingers, and fingernails.
- Wash for at least 15 seconds.
- Rinse with hands over the sink and pointed down so germs go down the drain.
- Dry hands with a paper towel.



Stress

There is good stress and bad stress. Stress is what motivates us to get things done. That is good, but too much stress can make our lives seem too hectic and overwhelming. Some ways to cope with stress to make your life go smoother are get enough sleep, eat healthy meals and exercise regularly, make an effort to accept what you cannot change, balance work with play, make time to relax each day, take one thing at a time, talk with a friend, and plan times to get away.

Stress Relievers to Do with Your Kids

- Paper ripping – Let your kids have a “ripping good time” with old newspapers or magazines. They can crumple paper into balls and throw the balls all over. The balls are soft and safe. End the activity by throwing the balls into a basket or box for clean-up time.
- Finger painting – Cover your table with an old shower curtain, plastic table cloth, or newspaper. Give your child a large piece of paper and some finger paint. Join in the fun. Use fingers, hands, and even elbows for painting a picture.
- Active play – Make sure your child has active play every day and join in the fun. Running, riding bikes, climbing activities, and playing ball are good ways to be active and to relieve stress.
- Laughter – Take time to be silly and laugh together with your child. Sing silly songs, read funny poems or stories, or just “goof around” with each other.

Family Time/Work Time: November 2008

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Resources: : *The Best Toys for Kids*, Nancy Wilson, October 2002, Better Kid Care Program, Penn State University; Health Link Online, Fall 2008, *Sneeze and Cough Etiquette* and *Wash Hands*, American Academy of Pediatrics – Pennsylvania Chapter; *Parenting Stress*, Parents Count, March 2000, Better Kid Care Program, Penn State University

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