

Activities to Support Healthy Balance

Balance/Vestibular Sense

In general, balanced development is stimulated by circular, spinning, or rocking movement. Movement of the head in any and all directions stimulates movement of fluid in the chambers of the semicircular canals in the inner ear. These canals are the sensory organs that inform human balance, i.e. the position of the body in relation to the earth and its gravity.

through the vestibular sense, we experience the relationship of the human being's physical body and the gravitation of the earth. It is through this sense that a human being can know where he or she is in three dimensions of space. This orientation of the human being in this plains of space is already inscribed by the positioning of the semicircular canals of the inner ear. These are oriented so that each canal indicates a spatial plane - right/left, front/back, and above/below. A secure and efficient sense of balance gives the human being security and confidence in orientation in space and provides a secure sense of “center“ out of which the human being can act out into the world.

Outside, Gross-Motor Activities

- Climbing on a jungle gym, trees, rope or chain ladder
- Swinging – in a seated swing or swinging by the arms from a bar
- Swinging in circles, such as on a tire swing
- Hammock swinging
- Writing, walking, and/or balancing on a seesaw
- Spinning like a top (esp if a child crazy and/or has a history of ear infections)
- Jump rope (also for proprioception)
- Jumping from a higher to a lower surface
- Leap from place to place
- Hopscotch (also for proprioception)
- Bouncing and catching a ball
- Scooter riding (also for proprioception)
- Swinging on a rope (hanging by arms also proprioceptive)
- Sliding down a “fireman’s pole”
- Sliding down an inclined surface (playground slide), sliding down headfirst when safe
- Merry-go-rounds
- Hand-over-hand bars
- Rolling down hills
- Sledding

Inside Out

- Climbing up and down stairs; walking up and down and elevated beam
- Obstacle courses
- Walking on uneven surfaces, such as on river stones, “tippery” rocks
- Building and playing in snug forts
- Balancing and walking on a beam, low fence, large rocks, a log, etc.
- Trampoline jumping
- Somersaulting
- Running in circles
- Log rolling
- Rocking, such as rocking horse or rocking chair
- Jumping over a rod
- Walk across a rocker board
- “Sky chairs” (swinging chair hung from a swivel)
- Hanging bar

Note: many of the activities listed here also involve other sensory rooms, such as proprioception/self-movement, full-body coordination, and motor planning, integrated movement of those spatial planes. Traditional ring games and practical work naturally connect many of these experiences together at one time. These are a rich source for fun and easy ways to encourage and support healthy development.