

# Active Child, Active Learner

“The richer our sensory environment and the greater our freedom to explore it, the more intricate will be the patterns for learning, thought and creativity” *Carla Hannaford, Smart Moves*

## Movement and Learning

The infant, going from lying to standing in the first part its life, experiences incredible strength and coordination accomplishments. It is at this time that there is a huge elaboration of nerve networks developed throughout the body and brain. It is the establishment and strengthening of these nerve networks that ensures the body and brain are given every possible opportunity for **maximum potential in all learning**.

### Sensory Systems

#### **Balance & Movement: the vestibular sense**

The neck, eyes and body provide information about gravity and space, balance and movement. They help us to learn about our head and body position in relation to the ground.

#### **Touch: the tactile sense**

The tactile sense provide information through the surface of the skin, from head to toe, about texture, shape and size of objects in the environment as well as one's self (body awareness). This sense connects with vision to interpret how objects feel.

#### **Vision**

The eyes must be actively moving for learning to occur. 90% of vision takes place in the brain as sight forms networks with other senses.

#### **Body Position: the proprioceptive sense**

The proprioceptive sense provides information through joints, about the body position, force, direction and movement of body parts. Its function is to increase body awareness and coordinate gross and fine motor experiences.

Daily experiences that develop sensory systems though Active Movement are crucial to gaining an understanding of the surrounding world. It is important for the child to progress in development at their own pace and not be rushed, as neural pathways take time to develop and strengthen.

### Ideas for teachers, parents and caregivers:

1. **Opportunity, time and practice** are basic and vital requirements to achieve and ensure that active movement is developed in every child's day.
2. There are **lots of different ways of stimulating the various sensory systems**. Be creative. For example, experiences that develop the tactile sense include being cuddled, exposure to different sensations, feathers, wind, soft material, bare feet, finger plays, active body awareness games, hands-on experiences, messy play, rough and tumble play.
3. Children need to be given plenty of opportunities to practice different active movement skills; a minimum of **at least 2000 times per skill** is a good benchmark.
4. For more information and ideas, refer to ***An Introduction to Active Movement - Koringa Hihiko***. Copies of this useful resource are available from Sport Canterbury by phoning 03 377 0962.

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## Healthy Nibbles for Tots

Nutrition and Physical Activity Information for Under 5s

For more information visit: [www.cph.co.nz](http://www.cph.co.nz)

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