



# Body Awareness

Parent information - For children aged 0-2



# Body Awareness

We do not live in isolation from others – people live in relationships with others. Their home and the space beyond it are the ways young children develop an understanding of themselves in context.

A child begins to learn to be aware of themselves as they regard their fingers and toes and realises they are a part of them, which unlike their toys cannot be lost. Through many ordinary experiences the growing child begins to be aware of:

- their own body and its different parts
- what they can do with their body whilst moving in various ways
- their body being separate from others
- how their own body is at any time in relation to things around them
- how other things are in relation to each other
- other people
- how they can influence the world of people or objects by crying, talking, or using their hands.

## Vision impaired children

- Vision impairment interferes with the development of self image.
- Vision impaired children have fewer ways of observing what others are doing – incidental learning.
- Vision impaired children use voice and touch to ‘fill in’ the gaps where there is no visual input.
- Vision impaired babies tend to lie very still because they are listening to what is happening around them – therefore less

experience of movement is made. Often dislike being placed on their front or chest and therefore do not have opportunities to lift their head – which helps to increase head and body control.

## Activities to encourage self awareness

- Lots of cuddles!! – Carry them around, so that they begin to be aware of ‘self’ and ‘mum’ or ‘other people’.
- Play games on your lap, including rhythmical movements, like swaying, bouncing, rocking. Songs or rhymes which involve the body being tickled, eg, ‘round and round the garden rhyme’.
- Blow gently or blow ‘raspberries’ on their feet, hands, back, tummy, neck and ears.
- Tickle their body all over with you fingers.
- Brush all over their body with a soft brush.
- Smooth their skin with the flat of your hands, using baby cream or lighted scented oil.
- Lie them on the floor, or in your arms with few clothes on so that they can feel their skin on your skin.
- If they hasn’t found their feet, touch them, tickle them and bring their hands up to feel them. Put bells on their feet as an auditory clue for them to know they are the maker of the sound.
- Touch other parts of their body, name them and put their hands on each part.
- Sing lots of rhymes that involve touching parts of the body.
- As they become more mobile, roll with them on the floor, let them climb over you so that they become aware of how your body is constructed, its size and how it moves.
- Compare body parts, eg, ‘mum’s foot’, Jack’s foot etc.

Give you and your baby time to do these activities – nothing should be rushed. These are learning experiences for you both and need a distraction free environment so that they become meaningful sessions. Offer a variety of activities on a daily basis as well as the routine opportunities, eg bathtime.

Try different floor surfaces, eg carpet, bed, or on a play mat offering a variety of textures and surface resistance.



## Further activities for later development

### Lying on tummy

- At first lift their shoulders and let them rest with their chest over a folded blanket, rolled up mat or pillow. It is important for your child to learn to lift their shoulders and chest whilst on the tummy.
- Lie on the floor in front of them, face to face and talk. Encourage them to place their hands on your face and then encourage them to place their hands flat on the floor.
- Place baby over a peek-a-boo inflatable roller and put objects and toys in front of them to encourage them to reach and explore. Objects of interest can include; favourite toy, crinkly paper and foil, musical object, light toy, a propped up mirror, textured toys – sponges, pom poms, a variety of balls, spoons on a metal tray etc.

### Developing head control

- Place your child sitting on your lap or in a prone position, stroking and talking to them with lots of soothing intonation in your voice to encourage positive associations.
- When they are on their tummy, blow gently onto the back of the head – they may raise the head to feel the breeze.
- When lying on the back, tuck a folded blanket under their shoulders and place a hanging mobile in front of them which is visually or auditory stimulating to encourage them to reach forward to touch.
- Place baby face forward over a large beach ball or gym ball, holding their hips whilst you roll them forwards and backwards.
- Lie on your back with child on your tummy very close to your face, blow on the forehead, to encourage them to look up to the breeze.
- When you know they have established some head control, kneel over the baby as they lie facing you on their back. Hold their hands and gently encourage them to lift and lower the head as you say 'up and down'.

# Body Awareness: Checklist

Lying on back happily	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Lying on tummy happily (when supervised)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Lying happily on side	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Locating objects placed on body, eg bells on feet	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Locating objects placed alongside body	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Enjoying sitting supported	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Enjoying sitting unsupported	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Enjoying forwards/backwards movements	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Beginning to recognise body parts during movement activities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:

Beginning to recognise body parts during movement activities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Demonstrate an understanding of 'up and down' by moving object or body	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Demonstrate similarities between oneself and others	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Demonstrate function of body parts, will straighten arm and legs, move head when asked	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Identify body parts	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Identify facial parts	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:
Begins to demonstrate knowledge of different expressions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Possibly <input type="checkbox"/> Definitely	What my child does/enjoys:

## Contact details

### **Vision Support Service**

County Hall, Colliton Park  
Dorchester DT1 1XJ

Telephone: 01305 224061

Email: [cs-servicesupport@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cs-servicesupport@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

 [\*\*dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\*\*](http://dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

Hearing and Vision Support Services are provided on behalf of Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)

**Working together for a strong and successful Dorset  
Education and Learning Children's Services**

All leaflets can be made available in audio tape, large print and Braille, or alternative languages on request.