

# Q&A

Getting active at home, and interacting effectively.

**Q** What are some ideas for physical activities we can do at home with our children aged three and five?

**Dr Esther Chia:** Engaging your child in physical activity is a great way to bond as a family, and also develops your child's psychomotor skills. For children as young as three, it is very important to develop Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) such as balancing, running, jumping, throwing and kicking. FMS lays the foundation to develop more complex motor skills such as running towards the ball, and jumping to catch it. It is a common misconception that children develop FMS naturally.

FMS can be taught and here are some activities that can be done at home:

**➤ Catching butterflies (Locomotion Skill)**

- Draw and cut out butterfly shapes with your child.
- Hang these at different heights, just above your child's immediate reach.
- Wrap a hairnet around a bent clothes hanger to form an insect-catching net.
- Ask your child to skip around while catching the butterflies with the net.



for parents

**➤ Role play as puppies (Stability Skill)**

- Get down on all fours, with arms and legs slightly bent like a puppy.
- Keep head up and move quickly forward, backward and sideways to chase after other 'puppies'.
- Imitate puppy-like behaviour by rolling over, then flipping back onto all fours.

**➤ Tic-Tac-Toe (Object Control Skill)**

- Draw a 3x3 Tic-Tac-Toe grid on a sheet of 'mahjong' paper.
- Play Tic-Tac-Toe by using small objects you can find at home to throw on a chosen space on the grid.

For more ideas, go to [www.myactivesg.com/start-out/children-youth/guide-for-parents/fundamental-movement-skills](http://www.myactivesg.com/start-out/children-youth/guide-for-parents/fundamental-movement-skills).

**Q** Interactions are important to developing infants and toddlers. As an educator, how can I be sure that my interactions are effective?

**Janet Gonzalez-Mena:** Infants and toddlers thrive on effective interactions with adults. You can tell if your interactions are effective by watching the reaction of an infant or a toddler. For example, imagine approaching a young baby who needs a diaper change. You approach slowly from the front so the baby can see you



for professionals

.....  
**YOU CAN TELL IF YOUR INTERACTIONS ARE EFFECTIVE BY WATCHING THE REACTION OF AN INFANT OR A TODDLER.**  
//Janet Gonzalez-Mena

coming. You make eye contact, and say, "I want to change your diaper..." You pause, hold out your arms and say quietly, "I'm going to pick you up now." The baby makes a slight movement of her arms to show that this part of the interaction is effective. You continue to involve the baby in the process, always going slowly and waiting for a response.

Now imagine this scene where two toddlers are in a confrontation. One raises his hand to hit the other. You take hold of the hand, saying in a quiet, matter-of-fact, voice, "I won't let you hit him". You continue talking calmly, putting into words what you perceive he is feeling. More calm words and soothing strokes may be needed as you continue to model gentleness with voice and actions. You know the interaction is effective when the dispute finally dissolves! ♥

## Ask The Experts!



**DR ESTHER CHIA** is a Sports Science PhD graduate who is passionate about developing the movement capabilities of children in Singapore. She believes that building a strong base in fundamental movement skills in young children is necessary for the development of more advanced sporting skills in the future years. Dr Chia is currently with ActiveSG at Sport Singapore.



**JANET GONZALEZ-MENA** is author of many books and articles, including *Infants, Toddlers and Caregivers*, in use in most infant/toddler courses in Singapore. She sits on the faculty for WestEd's Program for Infant Toddler Care, USA. Ms Gonzalez-Mena studied with Magda Gerber, infant specialist, as well as Anna Tardos, who now directs the well-known Pikler Institute in Budapest, Hungary.