



Gross Motor Skills

Muscle-strengthening activities are not just for adults. MayoClinic.com says “strength training can put your child on a lifetime path to better health and fitness.” Stronger muscles also help kids perform household chores, avoid injuries and improve sports performance. To pique your child’s interest in exercise, be creative. Fun activities can increase your child’s enthusiasm for muscle strengthening.

Monkey Bars - If you are looking for a fun activity to strengthen your kid’s muscles, head over to the local playground. Playing on the monkey bars strengthens the upper body. Swinging from one bar to the next also improves muscular endurance and coordination. Challenge your child to move all the way across the monkey bars without stopping. Closely supervise young children so you can catch them if they fall.

Medicine Balls - Children typically like playing with basketballs, baseballs, footballs or soccer balls. To strengthen their muscles, introduce kids to the medicine ball. “Strength & Power for Young Athletes” recommends using light medicine balls until kids can properly perform exercises. Gradually increase the weight in small increments. The squat toss effectively strengthens the legs, chest and arms. To practice this activity, stand with your feet about hip-width apart. Hold a medicine ball directly in front of your chest with both hands, slowly squat down until your thighs are parallel to the floor, then quickly jump straight up as you throw the ball high in front of you.

Wheelbarrow - Partner activities often are enjoyable for children. The wheelbarrow exercise allows kids to work together to strengthen their muscles. To perform the wheelbarrow, get on the floor in a pushup position. Ask a partner to grab your ankles and lift them to his waist level. Keep your body straight and do not allow your back to sag. Walk your hands forward and lead your partner across the floor. After you reach the other side of the room, switch positions with your partner. Make this activity more fun by having kids race each other. The wheelbarrow strengthens the pectorals, deltoids and triceps.

Inch Worm - Another way to make muscle strengthening fun is to have kids mimic animals. For example, have children try the inch worm. BodyBuilding.com says this activity strengthens the back, arms, shoulders and hamstrings. To practice the inch worm, spread your feet about shoulder-width apart. While keeping your feet flat on the floor, bend over and place your hands on the floor in front of you. Your body should make an inverted “V.” Walk your hands forward until your stomach is about three inches off the floor. When your body is parallel to the floor, walk your feet forward so you return to the inverted “V” position. Kids can repeatedly do the inch worm across the floor.