



Positioning for Play: Standing Up

Why is standing up to play important?

Most children enjoy standing as it places them in an upright position to explore and interact with objects and people in their environment at a different level. Standing assists in strengthening trunk and leg muscles and playing in the upright position encourages children to experiment with body movement. This is seen when children move along furniture to get toys, and "dance" by bending and straightening their knees.

Is my child ready to stand?

Children enjoy standing even before the muscles in their trunk and legs have enough control to support the body. Children with orthopedic and neuromuscular conditions may need an even greater amount of time to practice standing.

Here are a few things to consider prior to standing:

- ◆ The child should be able to hold his/her head in an upright position.
- ◆ The child's full foot make contact with the standing surface - so they are not standing on their tiptoes.
- ◆ The child should be able to straighten his/her legs while maintaining a slight bend in the knees.
- ◆ The keys to positioning any child are moderation and variety! Limit the amount of time the child spends in standing to 10 to 15 minutes at a time.

Options for standing supports:

Children with disabilities may require added supports to help them stand comfortably. The ideal standing position for play allows the child's arms and hands to be free for and does not require them to be used for support.

Walkers are now being used less often for supported standing/walking due to risk of injuries from falls. In response to this there are several products that assist a child to stand without the risk of falling. A few of these products include the Bouncing Entertainer (by GRECO), the Safe Stepper and wide based walkers. Below, we have provided greater detail on playing in one of our favorites, the Exersaucer.

Meet the Exersaucer:

◆ The Exersaucer has a rounded bottom and a sling seat which holds the child upright. It has legs that snap down to stabilize the base or which can be pushed up so the child can rock the saucer by shifting his/her body weight. The Exersaucer allows a child to experience movement by shifting weight or moving their legs without moving across the floor.



◆ The sling seat rotates so the child can spin in circles. The seat also locks into place for the child who is not as stable in standing. The seat height adjusts to three different settings to grow with your child.

◆ Each variety of Exersaucer comes with different toys affixed to the plastic tray that surrounds the seat. Some options include electronic toys that play music, toys to bat at and knobs to turn. We prefer the Exersaucers that have fewer toys and more room to attach a child's favorite toys.

◆ Some children may require additional support to stand upright in the Exersaucer. Place small pillows, stuffed animals and rolled towels in the front/back/sides of the Exersaucer to provide the child with more support.

Play Tips:

◆ Try using plastic links to attach toys to the Exersaucer tray. This way when the child throws the toy overboard it won't disappear and the child may even learn how to retrieve it!

◆ Sticky back Velcro can also be used to secure toys to the surface of the Exersaucer.

◆ The base of the Exersaucer (where the child places his/her feet) is convex. This may cause the child's feet to turn inward or make it more difficult to stand up. One

solution is to place a square of carpeting with a firm back on the floor of the Exersaucer to level out the bottom. Try adding a piece of corrugated cardboard under the carpet for firmness.

◆ Fill the base of the Exersaucer with water, sand, Jell-O or cooked spaghetti! These are all great textures for a child to experience with bare feet.

Resources:

Exersaucer

Local toy store (toys 'R' Us) and department stores

Stepper

One Step Ahead

P.O. Box 517

Lake Bluff, IL 60044

(800) 274-8440

Wide Based Walkers

Kolcraft Room Rover (800) 453-7673

F. Mason Safe Surround 1800 Series (800) 242-1922

Walkers with friction strips

Graco Tot Wheels Entertainer 665GX Series (800) 345-4109

Safety 1st Mobile "4 Wheelin" Walker 45701 (800) 739-7233