

HEAVY WORK

Heavy work is any activity that pushes or pulls against the body's muscles. This might be active movement like pushing a wagon, eating something crunchy or chewy, or even brain work like creating and problem-solving. Heavy work can be very grounding and calming for children. It supports their regulation, attention, transitions, sleep, learning, and social interactions. See the Calming Strategies resource guide for more information.

Heavy work helps children learn where their body is in space. It gives feedback to muscles and joints that helps children feel more settled and aware. For example, it allows them to lift a spoon to their mouth without spilling. This kind of input is naturally calming for many children.

Supporting Children's Development with Heavy Work

Each child responds differently to heavy work. Some children are calmed and regulated by it. Others may become overexcited or dysregulated after too much repetition or stimulation. Observe the child to learn what types of heavy work activities work well and which need to be time-limited or structured. Structured heavy work activities are planned, have a clear task, and have a natural endpoint, like putting groceries away, washing a window, or completing an obstacle course five times. Visual timers can also help. The activity ideas below support heavy work and body awareness. Adult supervision is important, especially for activities involving climbing or rough play.

Activities for Infants 0 to 12 Months

- Tummy time
- Crawling (e.g., on the floor, over uneven surfaces, in grass)
- Wrapping in a blanket (swaddling)
- Pushing and pulling objects (e.g., walkers, laundry baskets, pull toys)
- Climbing (e.g., stairs, soft climbers, playgrounds)
- Swimming
- Clapping
- Eating (especially crunchy or chewy foods like cereal or fruit bars)
- Pushing or pulling apart (e.g., large connecting beads, infant-safe magnets, child-safe containers with push-on lids)
- Jumping, bouncing, and crashing (e.g., jumping onto cushions, using a crash mat)

Activities for Children 12 Months and Up

- Crawling (e.g., animal walking, crawling over uneven surfaces)
- Pushing or pulling apart (e.g., large building bricks, child-safe magnets, containers with push-on lids, train sets, large floor puzzles)
- Propelling themselves with toys or activities (e.g., bikes, walkers, ride-on toys)
- Brain work (e.g., building forts, magnet tiles, making an obstacle course)

HEAVY WORK

Supporting Children's Development with Heavy Work Continued

Activities for Children 12 Months and Up Continued

- Lifting heavy items (e.g., laundry baskets, groceries)
- Moving heavy items in the playground or forest (e.g., rocks, sticks)
- Stacking or moving (e.g., chairs or books, watering can or hose)
- Using a backpack or hip pouch
- Filling empty jugs with water to move around
- Eating foods that are crunchy (cereal, celery) or chewy (jerky, dried fruit)
- Climbing (e.g., on the playground, climbing frame, rock wall, on rocks or trees, up a ladder, slide or knotted rope)
- Building (e.g., forts, block towers)
- Pushing and pulling objects (e.g., toy shopping cart, vacuum, wagon, wheelbarrow, laundry basket, tug of war, mop or sweep floor, shovelling, digging holes, large toy vehicles)
- Jumping, bouncing, and crashing (e.g., trampoline, bouncy castle, old mattress, couch cushions, bouncy ball or hopper toy, crash pad made with an old duvet cover and cushions, pillows, old foam, climbing structures)

Need More Support?

Local Resources:

- Local Pediatric Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy
 - [Kootenay Kids](#)
 - [Kootenay Family Place](#)

Resources Available at the WKCCRR Library:

- Large Wooden Blocks
- Tummy Time Kit
- Scooter Board with Handles
- Scooters and Run Bikes
- Large Connecting Beads
- Climbers
- Balance Boards