

Heavy Work for Toddlers and Preschoolers

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Plan **heavy work** throughout your child's daily routines as able. Watch for early "red flags," and have activities and items handy when they are needed. **Heavy work** helps improve your child's body awareness and attending. It can also have a calming effect and decrease defensiveness. *Be sure to supervise all activities to keep your child safe and share these ideas with your therapists.*

Whole-Body Heavy Work

- sit across from your child on the floor, hold hands and play "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"
- push a grocery cart (child size or at the store) or laundry basket that is weighted down
- push or pull a wagon
- play tug of war with a towel or hula hoop
- push a large ball while you offer resistance (with hands or child lying on floor and push with feet)
- push cars and trucks across the floor
- put a soft but weighted object (bag of rice) on a towel and use it like a parachute to shake and lift
- stuff all the stuffed animals into a pillowcase
- carrying or dragging anything with some weight to it (fill a pillowcase with books and play "Santa")
- use large cups and buckets in the tub and sandbox
- pull and stretch out some old socks
- log roll on the floor, or down a small hill (you can have your child lie down on a large towel or small blanket and you lift the end and roll them off)
- help your child do a summersault
- jump or crash onto a bean bag chair, large pillow, or couch cushions on the floor
- jump on a trampoline
- sit and bounce on a large ball or happy hop ball, with help roll over the ball on tummy onto hands and back onto feet
- roll over your child who is stretched out on the floor with a large ball while pressing down a little on the ball (child lying on tummy and/or back), you can tap or bounce the ball on them too
- make a child "sandwich" between two large pillows or cushions, or roll them up in a towel or blanket like a "hot dog"
- play on playground equipment (climb, slide, hang, swing, run, jump etc.)
- have your child sit in a sturdy laundry basket, then bump it up and down, tip it from side to side and front to back, tip them out sideways so they have to catch themselves with their hands/arms
- crawl on knees or belly under tables or chairs, up and down the stairs (backwards on tummy)

- bear crawl (up on feet and extended arms)
- "wheelbarrow" walk (begin by holding your child at their hips and move your support toward their feet as you are able)
- rock in a child sized rocking chair pushing off with feet
- kick balls, pillows, stuffed animals
- wear a backpack that is weighed down with books etc. (no more than 10% of your child's weight) for up to 30 minutes, then take it off for 30-60 minutes, and put it on again

There are many items you can purchase to support your child's **heavy work** (child sized trampolines weighted or compression vests, weighted balls or animals and lap pads, weighted blankets, therapy balls, body socks, stretch resistance bands). You can find lots of things around your house too!

Mouth and Hands

Plan **heavy work** throughout your child's daily routines as able. Watch for early signals and have activities and items handy when they are needed. **Heavy work** helps improve your child's body awareness and attending. It can also have a calming effect and decrease defensiveness. **Be sure to supervise all activities to keep your child safe.**



Get that mouth working by....

Chewing

- Cheese sticks, gum, licorice, gummies, dried fruit, fruit leather

Crunching

- Apples, pretzels, raw vegetable, crackers, nuts

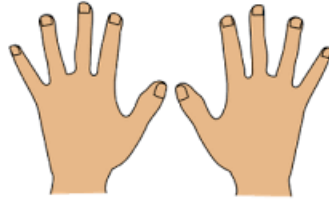
Sipping and Sucking

- Water or juice with a crazy straw, thicker liquids through a straw (smoothie, apple juice mixed with apple sauce), water from a large sports bottle

Blowing

- Party favors or whistles, through a straw to spread paint on paper—or to make a path in the yogurt

Even deep breathing in and out can be calming. There are many chewy oral motor tools you can buy.



Get those hands working by....

Pulling and Pushing

- Resistance bands, suction cup toys like Squigz, Pop Toobs, Duplos and Legos, magnetic toys, wagon or filled laundry basket, stuffed animals into a pillowcase

Holding and Squeezing

- Heavy objects like weighted balls or beanbags, swing or other activity to stay safe, stress balls, sponges and cloths in water, play dough or putty, balloon filled with beans or rice, crumpling paper, spray bottle

There are lots of fidget toys and stress balls/toys available. Look around your home and see what can you find! Heavy work for hands helps support fine motor development.