

October  
2004

# Childcare and children's health

An information sheet for parents

## Music experiences for young children

Most young children enjoy music and they respond positively and naturally to it. They like to dance and bob around to CDs and tapes; make sounds with instruments and toys; laugh and giggle at finger plays and knee bounces, and join in with songs they know well.

Besides being enjoyable, music activities are also good for children: they can stimulate their learning and development in language, memory and listening, as well as physical and social skills.

Music can be a regular part of young children's daily family routines, play, and group activities.

### Music as part of daily routines

There are many ways in which music can become part of daily family routines, such as dressing, bathtime or bedtime. Songs and rhymes need not add extra time to these regular tasks but they can significantly enhance the quality of the interactions.

You can sing lullabies to settle a baby at sleep time, or gentle songs to soothe an upset toddler, or ritualised songs for greeting, goodbye and pack-away times.

Songs and rhymes can be created or adapted to match specific routines. For example:

- *Here we go round the mulberry bush* can be adapted to fit most situations by changing the words. The lyrics can become *This is the way we... wash our hands, or put on our hats or pack up our toys*. Singing about the task you are doing helps build children's language by giving them a model of appropriate language for what the child is actually doing at the time.
- *This is the way we wash our hands* can easily be extended to include other parts of the routine: *this is the way we roll up our sleeves; ... use the soap; ... turn on the tap; and ... dry our hands*. Songs often involve the repetition of words and phrases, and this helps with language development.
- For older children, music can be combined with movement. The song *Let's go walking*, for example, can be adapted to include alternative ways of moving such as jumping, galloping, tiptoeing or sidestepping.

Music also offers endless possibilities to help young children learn. Advertisers know that tunes help messages stay in people's minds. In the same way, songs can be used to reinforce fundamental learning like basic literacy (alphabet songs) and numeracy (counting songs).

### Music as play

Young children learn about their world through play, and therefore benefit from having opportunities to play with music. Children can explore sounds and create them using simple instruments, sound-producing toys and soundmakers (everyday objects like pots and pans that can be used to make sounds).

### Music in groups

Music activities are also great with groups of children. When adults lead children in group music activities, they can model musical behaviours for the children to copy, such as singing, playing instruments, listening and creating with sounds. Adult participation and enthusiasm also encourages the children to join in music making as well as helping develop positive attitudes towards music.



An initiative of



Supported by



National Childcare Accreditation Council



Australian Government  
Department of Family and  
Community Services