

# Encouraging a child to stand and step

## Information for Parents and Carers

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### What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet has been designed to provide parents and carers with ideas on how to help their child to stand and step for the first time.

### How can I help my child to stand?

In order to stand and walk your child must have enough muscle strength in their legs, hips and core. This strength will come from rolling, sitting and crawling, so try to encourage these activities as often as possible.

Your child can be held in a supported standing position from an early age. This will allow your child to experience the feeling of taking their body weight through their feet. Most babies will start to support themselves on their legs from around four to five months.

You can stand your child in many different ways, for example on your lap when you are sitting in a chair, in front of a low table or sofa, or on the sofa next to you with their back against the back cushions. Most children will bend their knees and bounce up and down, building muscle in the legs and hips.

### How can I help my child learn to pull up to standing?

Kneel-sit on the floor in front of a low sofa or sturdy table (see image 1). Place toys in front of your child and on the furniture.

Sit your child on your knee with their feet on the floor.

Encourage your child to reach forward for the toys on the ground initially, this will teach them to transfer their weight forward. Then encourage your child to reach for toys and hold onto the furniture – see image 1.

Put your hands around their hips and assist them into standing by moving their hips forwards as they straighten their legs – see image 2.

Alternatively you can place your child in a kneeling position, this position will challenge your child's strength and balance, preparing them for standing – see image 3.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

## How can I help my child to start stepping

Cruising is when a child steps sideways holding onto a stable piece of furniture. This is an important developmental milestone that is needed before independent standing and walking.

Before your child can learn to cruise they will need to be able to stand supporting themselves with their hands on a piece of furniture, taking weight through both their legs.

Place an interesting toy a few steps away from your child, on the couch or low table to encourage them to take steps sideways to get to the toy – see image 4 below. If the toy is directly in front of your child there will be no motivation to move.

You can also help your child to learn this movement if they are not attempting to step by themselves. When your child has both hands on the furniture, slowly and gently lift one leg off the ground, move it a small distance to the side to widen their legs, and then repeat with the other leg to bring the child's feet towards each other.

As your child's confidence increases they will hold on with one hand and will eventually let go.



Image 4

You can help your child to walk by holding their hand until they are confident enough to let go. Alternatively, push-along toys can be fun as a child moves from cruising to walking independently. Heavier wooden trolley style toys give more stability to the child than lighter plastic ones. We do not promote the use of baby walkers.

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