



Heavy Work Activities

Over the past two weeks we have all experienced countless changes to our daily routines from schools closing and therapy services moving to telehealth to Californians being told to shelter in place. These changes have been hard for everyone but especially for children who thrive on routines and stability. Engaging in heavy work activities throughout the day, can help children feel more organized, calm, and regulated. As a result, the child may be better able to follow directions, engage in daily activities, and fall asleep at night with greater ease.

Heavy work is any type of activity that involves heavy resistance and input to the muscles – pushing, pulling, climbing, crawling, jumping, and lifting heavy objects. The key ingredient to any heavy work activity is the stimulation of our proprioceptive system. This system helps us understand our body position in space.

In order for heavy work to be most effective, it is best to do for 10-30 minutes/day depending on your child's needs. Here are some ways your child can engage in heavy work activities while sheltering in place. Please reach out to your child's occupational therapist for more information specific to your child's age and needs.

All heavy work activities should be monitored by an adult or older sibling for safety.

Playtime Activities:

- Pull a sibling on a magic carpet ride using a towel/blanket
- Push a laundry basket filled with clothes, toys, books, or canned goods
- Carry toys inside a pillowcase
- Tug of war
- Floor or wall push-ups
- Weight bearing yoga with hands and feet on the ground (see how long your child can hold each position)
- Animal walks: Bear walks, crab walks, snake crawls (on belly), frog jumps
- Wheelbarrow walks
- Pillow case jumping/obstacle course
- March or jog in place
- Lunges or skipping down the hall
- Walking up/down stairs
- Pillow fight
- Create an obstacle course
- Crashing into pile of couch pillows
- Jump on a trampoline
- Pour items such as sand, dry beans, dry rice, or water back and forth between containers (larger containers = more heavy work, dig into containers using scoopers or hunt for buried items)

- Squeeze, squish, and smash play dough (you can find homemade and edible play dough recipes on the internet)
- Play catch with a big pillow or ball
- Build a fort (include chairs and large pillows for extra heavy work while constructing)
- Lay on tummy while reading, doing a puzzle, or even doing homework
- Pull tape off the wall (you can tape puzzle pieces/small toys to the wall for child to remove)
- Rip/tear old magazines/newspapers
- Blow bubbles, kazoo, harmonica, pinwheel, or similar items (provides proprioceptive input orally)

Chore/Helper Activities

- Have the child help in the kitchen: Stir thick batter, knead and roll pizza dough, use rolling pin, peel fruits
- Carry and put away laundry or bags of groceries (make sure child is given bags of items that will not break)
- Vacuum
- Mop/swift the floor
- Wash the windows
- Make the bed

Snack/Mealtime Ideas (consider your child's food preferences)

- Provide chewy or crunchy food at snack or meal time: Celery sticks, carrots, apples, fruit leather, jerky, pita chips, meats (some kids like to chew on uncooked pasta or ice as well)
- Drink thick liquids through a thick straw: milkshakes, smoothies, yogurt, applesauce
- Drink from a suction water bottle
- Chewing gum

References

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