
Under 5's and Sport

We often get asked about what sorts of activities children under the age of five should be doing and whether they should be playing sport.

Here at Nuku Ora we believe children under the age of five should not be playing sport specific games. Our philosophy is based on numerous research that has been done on child development and pathways into sport. "Students are taught to recognise letters and sounds before learning to read words, understand sentences or tackle chapter books. Learning to play sport is the same. Students must learn how to control a ball before learning to kick it in the air, trying to get it through the posts or attempting a drop goal in the Rugby World Cup Final".

Children should be given every opportunity to play and explore. Go out into the backyard and run around, climb trees, play games, throw and kick a ball around, go down to your local playground and explore the equipment there.

Parents often think that the earlier we get them into sport the better they will be. This is not so! Early specialisation leads to a higher percentage of drop out not only from that particular sport but sport overall. The most successful athletes are those that have played a range of sports throughout their schooling years. To do this they need to have developed their fundamental movement skills (FMS) and to develop these children need to be given every opportunity to play and explore.

Parents often wonder about what activities they should get their under-fives involved in. We recommend swimming, play gym, music and dance activities. Activities that will help the children develop all of their fundamental movement skills. Or just get out there and play and have fun with them yourselves!

As teachers in early childhood centres you are in the perfect place to be able to plan for lots of activities and opportunities where the children can develop their FMS of:

- Rotation and balance - rolling, spinning, swinging, being upside down, balancing on different body parts and on equipment
- Manipulation (object control) - throwing, catching, hitting, bouncing, kicking etc using balloons, bubbles, scarves, feathers, beanbags and large balls
- Locomotion - walking, running, jumping, hopping, skipping etc
- Movement and Body Awareness - knowing about our body parts- where they are and what they are for, spatial awareness and language

Get out there and have a go! The more opportunities we can give the children to develop their FMS and the more we can show them that physical activity is fun, the longer we will keep them in sport and being physically active for life.