

## **Providing a Healthy Environment for Development Birth-Twelve Months**

Here are some practical, easy, and fun ways to provide an environment that encourages normal neurological organization from birth to twelve months:

- Let baby's arms and legs be free to move.
- Put baby on the tummy on the floor for exercise and play as soon as possible.
- Provide a smooth surface that baby can move across when she is ready (wood, linoleum, a piece of cardboard from a very large box). Kitchen floors are great and usually cleaner than rugs! Lying on blankets, quilts, or carpet make it very difficult for baby to travel.
- Let feet and hands be bare so that baby can use them for belly crawling – an important fundamental pattern. Socks and long sleeves are slippery and make it difficult for baby to crawl.
- Get down on your belly facing baby and coo and talk.
- Mimic baby's movements: stretch head up, crawl on belly, creep on hands and knees, roll over, sit up. Moving through the fundamental patterns is good for everyone's brains!
- Do not teach your child to walk. Crawling on your belly and creeping on hands and knees (in that order) are essential for creating a healthy person emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually. Sometime between 12 and 15 months is a fine time to start walking.
- If baby begins to pull up on furniture before crawling and creeping, remove some of the furniture so that there is a big space for baby to move on tummy and hands and knees.
- Nurse baby, hold baby, touch baby, massage baby, swing, sway, turn, dip, and dive with baby. Sing to baby and dance with baby!