

Kids Need to play

By: Dr. Norm Hoffman

We all know that kids love to play, but in our increasingly electronic world, hopscotch has been replaced with the latest app designed to keep kids' attention focused firmly on a small screen. So what? Doesn't this technology help teach kids the computer skills they will need in the real world? Maybe, maybe not. But the bigger question is, "What skills are they losing by avoiding all that running and jumping that we did when we were kids?"

The answer is, "A lot." The benefits of physical exercise are many, but some of the key benefits for children include proper brain development. The more input the brain receives from the body – particularly the feet, legs, hips and spinal column – the more nerve cells are excited and the more solid the nerve pathways become. This can be seen when a child learns to play a sport or a musical instrument. The more they repeat certain movements, the more automatic they become. As the brain receives this information, it increases the number of connections. In short, more physical play time means more potential brain connections for focusing on tasks, self-control and self-discipline. These, in turn, can be very useful tools when applied to other forms of learning.

Children should be given opportunities for brain development in many different areas including language, logic, art, music, problem-solving, relationships, and life skills.

Parents will likely see positive benefits by allowing children to have exposure to a variety of stimuli for brain development. Of course, it is also advisable allow your child to focus on only one or two major extracurricular activities to prevent burnout. Improved self-discipline and the ability to delay gratification (i.e. the ability to wait for a reward for good behaviour) need to be taught by parents. But balanced, active spinal nerve pathways can make this job easier for them.

When planning playtime activities, think about kicking or throwing a ball, jumping rope, climbing, swinging, and so forth. Try to stay away from TV, video games and computers. Avoid activities that model violence or other behaviors in which you do not wish your kids to become proficient. If children must play quietly indoors, give them hands-busy, mind-creative options such as jigsaw puzzles, crosswords, building blocks, dolls, and crafts. Even babies will do better if given play time on their tummies and as they learn to crawl, give them pillows and blankets to crawl over to keep the brain stimulation coming.

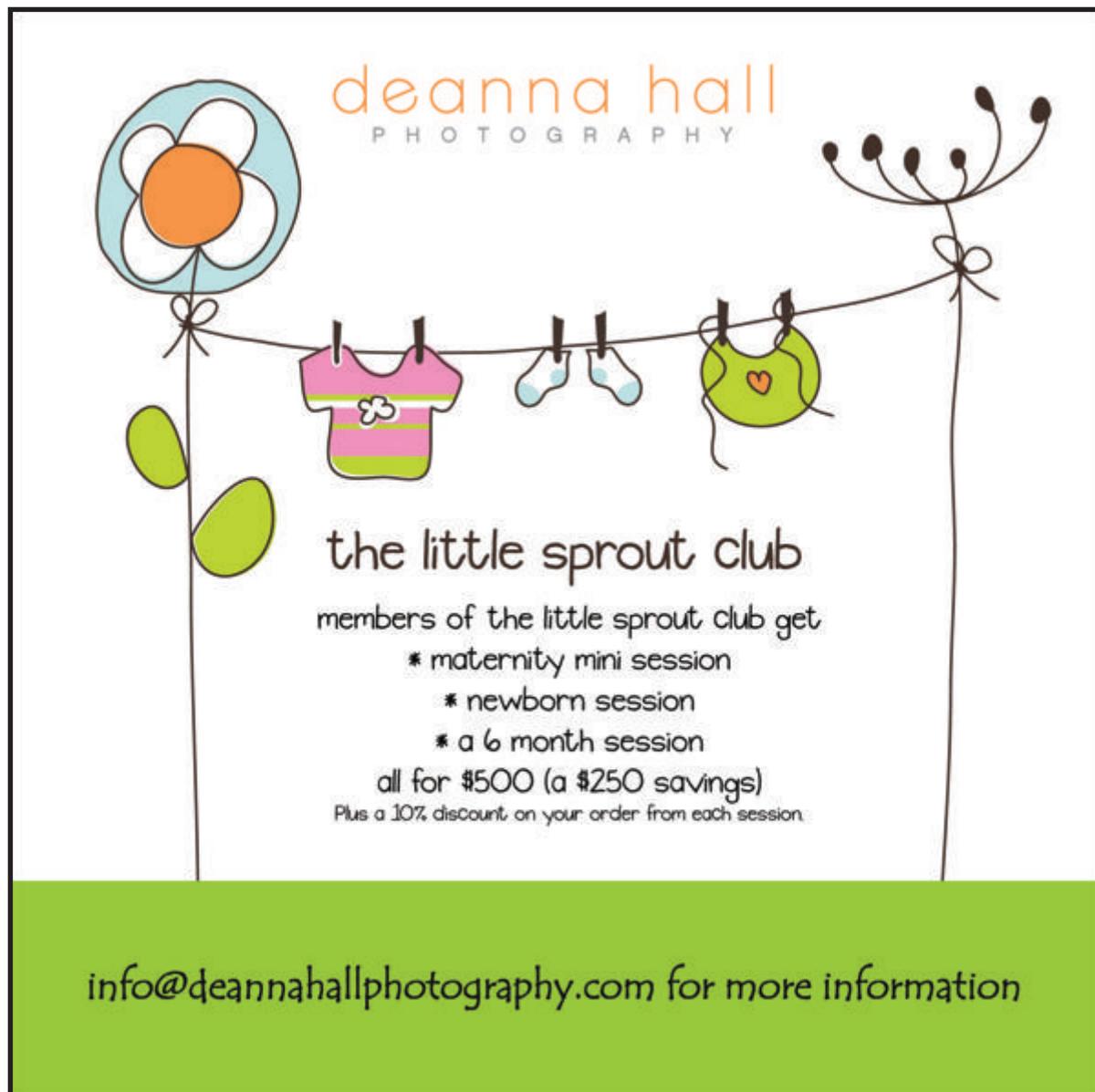
What else can be done? Well, if a lack of nerve stimulation up the spinal cord decreases proper brain cell development, then there is one more thing parents need to be aware of. When a spinal joint gets stuck, its lack of motion causes less information to be transmitted to the brain. Therefore, it is a good idea to have all children, but

especially those who seem to have difficulty with balance, coordination, learning, focusing and self-control checked for these spinal fixations called vertebral subluxations. Only a chiropractor is trained and licensed to fully evaluate and correct vertebral subluxations.

This may explain why parents who bring their children to the chiropractor report better attention spans in school, easier mental focusing, fewer disruptive behaviors and sometimes "a totally different kid" after starting chiropractic care. Making an appointment for your child to see a chiropractor is as important as checkups with your dentist and optometrist. And if your child has vertebral subluxations that are affecting his ability to perform at his best, then scheduling a chiropractic check-up might be one of the most important things you could do today.

Dr. Hoffman is a chiropractor in Red Deer. For more information, visit www.hoffmanwellness.com. For more information on the IgG test and the benefits it has to offer, please visit the website for Rocky Mountain Analytical Laboratory, located in Calgary at www.rmalab.com

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