

# Exercise and have fun with your grandchildren!

## GAMES AND EXERCISES FOR GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN

### Being active with Grandma and Grandpa is good for everyone!

We know that engaging in regular physical activity has many positive effects on both the physical and psychological health of adults, teenagers and children. For aging adults, physical activity, which increases muscle strength and endurance, flexibility, balance and agility can:

- maintain or increase their functional autonomy and mobility, allowing them to continue to carry out not just the basic activities of daily life but other useful activities like shopping, going to get the mail, taking a taxi or the bus alone, and so on, for a longer period of time
- reduce their risk of falling by preserving good muscle tone
- lengthen their expectancy of leading an active life, a key indicator of the quality of life

The suggested games and exercises will help you increase your physical fitness in these areas and, at the same time, strengthen family ties with your grandchildren. These lively special moments will reinforce the bonds between you because, by “playing exercise” regularly, you will discover different aspects of their personalities and get to know them better. Besides, what better gift is there than to give a child opportunities to develop through active play!<sup>1</sup>

### Before your start

- Increase your body temperature for five to ten minutes before exercising so you can work your muscles safely. Stand on tiptoe, stretch your arms over your head, make broad gestures, bend over—it’ll be fun!
- Be careful not to hold your breath while exercising. Breathe normally.
- Be sure to hold the child properly while exercising. Hold a baby aged 6 months or younger close to your body, support the baby’s head and neck with one hand and place the other hand under the baby’s bottom.
- Make sure that you play exercise in a safe area.
- Check regularly to see if the child is still interested. If he or she is tired or is not paying as much attention as before, don’t insist on continuing. You can go back to the game or exercise later. Don’t forget that the primary objective is to have a good time together!

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<sup>1</sup> Education specialists, child development specialists and pediatricians agree that active play that gives children experiences of creativity and friendship in a context of fun affects their physical, emotional, social and cognitive well-being, fosters the development of motor skills and can help them adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle throughout adolescence and adulthood.

### Now, let's play!

To begin, during each session and for most of the exercises, do 10 to 15 repetitions at least twice (2 or more series). If you have difficulty doing 10 repetitions, do as many as you can. The number of repetitions you can do will probably increase from session to session. **Depending on the exercise, alternate sides after each set.**

A good way to make progress is to start by increasing the number of repetitions per series; for example, do 2 series of 12 repetitions instead of 2 series of 10 repetitions. Later, add another series while slightly reducing the number of repetitions; for example, do 3 series of 8 repetitions instead of 2 series of 12 repetitions. Later still, increase the number of repetitions in each series. As your child is gaining weight every day, you don't have to worry about increasing the weight load. Your grandchild is doing it for you!

## FROM BIRTH

### The Cat (front plank)

**Grandparent's position:** On all fours, head and back perfectly aligned.

**Child's position:** Lying on his/her back, head below yours.

**Movement:** Contract your abs and pelvic floor while keeping your head and back perfectly straight. Hold the contraction for 15 seconds, relax and start again. **Be careful not to bend your back during the exercise.**

**Level 1:** Perform the movement by supporting yourself on your elbows and moving your knees back, always keeping your head and back perfectly aligned.

**Level 2:** Perform the movement, supporting yourself on your elbows and toes.

**Note:** At each level, you can gradually increase the length of the contraction.



# AS OF 4 MONTHS AND WHEN THE CHILD HOLDS UP HIS/HER HEAD AND NECK WELL

## Baby kangaroo

**Grandparent's position:** Sitting on the floor, head and back perfectly straight, knees slightly bent at a 45 degree angle, arms at the sides of the body and elbows bent at a 90 degree angle, holding the child under the arms.

**Child's position:** In front of you, close to your body.

**Movement:** Perform the following sequence:

- I. Contract your abs, keeping your head and back perfectly aligned.
- II. Turn your torso slightly by moving the child to one side and then back to the centre.
- III. Move to the other side, then back to the centre.

**Level 1:** When you turn your torso to one side, hold that position for 5 seconds before returning to the centre.

**Level 2:** Perform the movement with your arms stretched out (elbows less and less flexed) in such a way that the child is away from your body throughout the movement.

**Note:** Imitate the sound of the kangaroo jumping, "Bong, bong, bong."



## The koala

**Grandparent's position:** Sitting well back in a chair, legs stretched forward supported on your heels (toes pointing toward the ceiling), body leaning slightly forward, holding the child by the arms.

**Child's position:** Lying on his/her tummy, on your legs.

**Movement:** Straighten your knees and then lower your heels to the ground.

**Level 1:** Perform the movement one leg at a time. The child is lying on his/her tummy, on one of your legs.

**Level 2:** Sit in the middle of the chair and perform the Level 1 movement.

# AS OF 6 MONTHS AND WHEN THE CHILD CAN SIT UP WITH HELP

## The crocodile

**Grandparent's position:** Lying on your side (ideally with your back against a wall), legs together and stretched out, knees slightly bent.

**Child's position:** For the exercise using the right leg, seat the child facing you, straddling your right thigh. Hold the child's left hand with your right hand and right thigh with your left hand. For the left leg, do the opposite.

**Movement:** Contract your glutes and raise your leg some 60 cm off the ground, then slowly lower your leg until it is approximately 5 cm from the other leg.

**Level 1:** Perform shorter, quicker movements.

**Level 2:** Perform the movement by placing the child a little further down your thigh, but keeping his/her above your knee.



## The seal

**Grandparent's position:** Lying on your stomach, hands on each side of your head at ear level, arms stretched alongside your body.

**Child's position:** In the same position, in front of you (head to head).

**Movement:** Slowly lift the top of your body, supporting yourself on your forearms (lumbar stretch), then come back down.

**Level 1:** Perform the movement by slowly lifting the top of your body and your legs at the same time, without supporting yourself on your forearms.

**Level 2:** Perform the Level 1 movement and hold the position for 5 seconds before coming back down.

**Fun tip:** At each repetition, play a game of peek-a-boo with the child.



# AS OF AGE 1 OR WHEN THE CHILD IS CRAWLING

## London Bridge

**Grandparent's position:** Standing, feet in line with your shoulders, one hand resting on the back of a chair.

**Child's position:** On all fours in front of you, waiting for the start signal.

**Movement:** Perform the following sequence while the child passes between your legs as many times as possible.

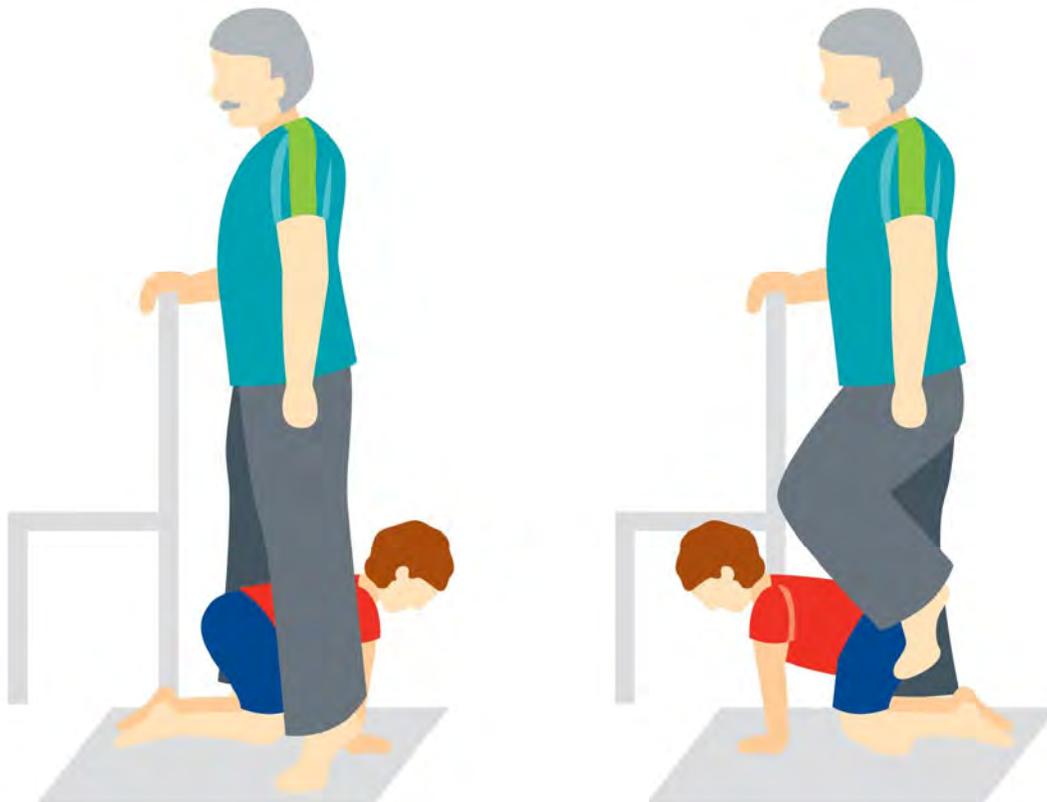
- I. Stand up on tiptoe and then back down again.
- II. Alternately lift your knees.

**Level 1:** Perform the sequence without using the back of a chair for support:

**Level 2:** Perform the Level 1 movement more rapidly.

**Fun tip:** Sing this well-known children's song during the exercise!

"London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down  
London Bridge is falling down, my fair lady!"



## The little boat

**Grandparent's position:** On all fours.

**Child's position:** On all fours, in front of you.

**Movement:** While contracting your abs, stretch one leg back. The leg should be in line with your back and head. If he/she can, the child performs the same movement.

**Level 1:** At the same time as you stretch your leg, stretch your opposite arm forward and tap the child's palm. The child can try to perform the movement or simply tap your palm.

**Level 2:** Perform the Level 1 movement and hold the position for 5 seconds while tapping the child's palm.

**Fun tip:** Sing this children's song during the exercise!

"There was once a little boat, there was once a little boat  
That never on the sea had sailed, that never on the sea had sailed  
Ahoy! Ahoy!  
Ahoy! Ahoy! Sailor,  
Sailor sailing on the high sea  
Ahoy! Ahoy! Sailor,  
Sailor sailing on the high sea"



# AS OF AGE 2

## The little train

**Grandparent's position:** Standing behind the child, hands on his/her shoulders, knees slightly bent.

**Child's position:** Standing in front of you.

**Movement:** Perform the following sequence walking one behind the other, like a little train. If he/ she can, the child performs the same sequence.

- I. Take 4 steps on tiptoes.
- II. Take 4 steps on your heels, contracting your abs and sticking out your bottom to help you keep your balance.

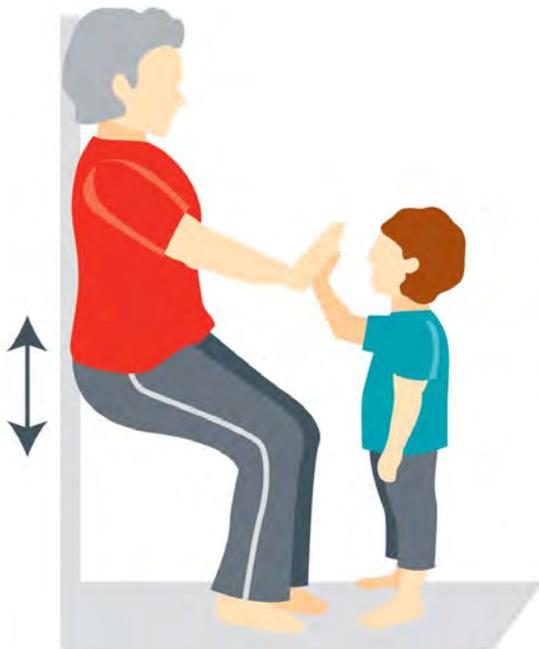
**Level 1:** Without moving forward, get up on tiptoes and hold the position for 5 seconds, then balance on your heels for 5 seconds. Repeat the sequence.

**Level 2:** Perform the Level 1 movement without putting your hands on the child's shoulders for support.

**Fun tip:** Have fun with all sorts of steps—bigger, smaller, crossover, sideways, and so on. Use your imagination!



# AS OF AGE 3



## Tap there!

**Grandparent's position:** Standing, back against a wall, feet in line with shoulders approximately 30 cm from the wall, knees slightly bent, hands on hips.

**Child's position:** Standing in front of you.

**Movement:** Perform the following sequence:

- I. Contracting your abs, bend your knees halfway (at about 45 degrees) and let yourself slide slowly down the wall. **Your back must remain perfectly straight and your knees should not be any further forward than the tips of your toes.**
- II. Tap each of the child's palms and then slowly return to your original position.

**Level 1:** Bend your knees halfway (at about 45 degrees) or all the way (90 degrees) and hold this position while alternately tapping the child's left and right palms 5 times. Return to your original position.

**Level 2:** Bend your knees halfway (at about 45 degrees) or all the way (90 degrees) and raise your heels so that you are balancing on the balls of your feet. Hold this position while alternately tapping the child's left and right palms 5 times. Return to your original position.

# AS OF AGE 4

## Hand in hand

**Grandparent's position:** Standing, feet in line with shoulders, knees slightly bent, arms against each side of the body, palms facing backwards.

**Child's position:** Standing behind you, hands in your hands.

**Movement:** Contracting your abs and, keeping your arms tight against your body, push both your hands back at the same time. The child pushes against your hands to provide resistance. Maintain the contraction for 15 seconds, relax and start again.

**Level 1:** Perform the movement standing on tiptoe.

**Level 2:** Perform the movement by pushing one hand back at a time. The child pushes against your hand with both his/her hands, thus providing greater resistance.



## The tightrope walker

**Grandparent's position:** Standing, feet in line with shoulders, one foot on the ground for support and one foot on the ball.

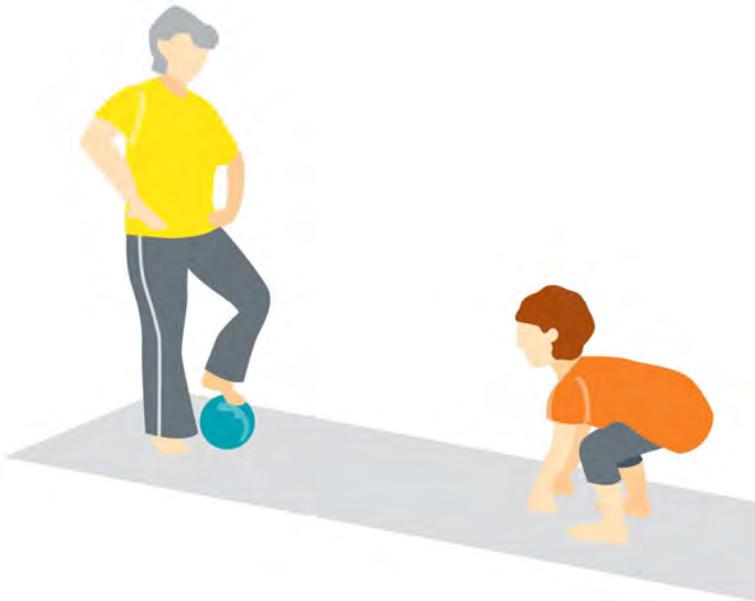
**Child's position:** Standing in front of you, waiting to catch the ball.

**Movement:** Perform the following sequence:

- I. While contracting your abs, use one foot to kick the ball to the child.
- II. The child catches the ball with his/her hands and rolls it back to you along the ground.
- III. Try to catch the ball with one foot. Once the ball is stabilized, kick it back to the child.

**Level 1:** Perform the sequence standing farther apart from each other.

**Level 2:** Perform the sequence using different types and sizes of balls.



# The equilibrist

**Grandparent's position:** Standing, balanced on one leg.

**Child's position:** Standing facing you, balanced on one leg (ideally the opposite one to yours).

**Movement:** Very close together, pass the ball back and forth to each other while staying balanced on one leg. Change legs after 5 passes.

**Level 1:** To perform the movement, move further apart from each other and bounce the ball once.

**Level 2:** Perform the Level 1 movement and circle the ball around a part of your body before passing it to the child.



## Last, stretch and relax!

End your session with a period of relaxation. Your grandchild might be restless after “playing exercise” with you. Put on some soft music, stretch, slowing swing or vibrate your arms and legs. Breathe deeply, massage your grandchild or tell a story.

## To conclude

Take opportunities to be active with your grandchildren. You will quickly feel the many physical and psychological benefits while developing a wonderful relationship. Also, don't forget that children learn by imitation. By being an active grandparent, you are giving your grandchildren a love of playing and moving vigorously. Everyone will enjoy these excursions into the world of physical activity!



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