

1.4 **Health and Well-being**

Children's **health** is an integral part of their **emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being** and is supported by attention to these aspects.

**Growing and developing**

- Although newborn babies vary in size their growth rates are very similar.
- Children's health and well-being are affected by both the genes they inherit and the environment in which they live.
- Development is very rapid in the first three years.
- Children really do thrive when their physical and emotional needs are met.

Physical well-being

- Physical well-being includes the growth and physical development of babies and children. They have a biological drive to use their physical skills and benefit from physical activity.
- Being physically healthy is not simply about having nutritious food. It also includes having a clean and safe environment; appropriate clothes; healthcare; mental stimulation; access to the outdoors and loving relationships.
- For babies and children rest and sleep are as important as good food.
- Remember that children gain control of their whole bodies gradually.

Emotional well-being

- Babies and children have emotional well-being when their needs are met and their feelings are accepted. They enjoy relationships that are close, warm and supportive.
- Making friends and getting on with others helps children to feel positive about themselves and others.
- Children gain a sense of well-being when they are encouraged to take responsibility and to join in by helping with manageable tasks that interest them.
- Children feel a sense of belonging in the setting when their parents are also involved in it.

Effective practice

- Find the best ways to offer care, nurture and learning that match the needs and interests of the individual baby or child.
- Recognise that parents and grandparents may have a huge amount of knowledge about their children which they may be happy to share.
- Provide opportunities for children to explore, play and learn in a safe and secure environment, remembering that children's mobility and movement are important for their development.
- Have reasonable rules that fit with children's rhythms and give a pattern to daily life.
- Recognise child abuse and neglect and know who to consult if there is a cause for concern.



Reflecting on practice

Think about the food that your setting encourages children to enjoy.

- How do you encourage children to know about and choose healthy snacks?
- How are foods from different cultures presented to children – as a novelty or as something for which they may develop a taste?
- How do you help children to learn about the food chain and planting, growing, gathering, preparing and using different foods?

Think about the opportunities children have for activity and rest.

- Is there a balance of activities so that babies and children can be involved in activity some of the time and relax or rest for some of the time?
- How does the environment support children's choices to be active or to rest? Are there quiet places or dens where children can relax and interesting, large spaces for vigorous free movement?

Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring safety without stopping reasonable risk-taking.
- Recognising the extra requirements of babies and children with special needs, and planning how to ensure these children have access to similar opportunities as their peers.
- Fostering the physical, mental and emotional well-being of every child individually while recognising and meeting children's needs to belong and be part of a group.
- Maintaining children's healthy interest in their own bodies, their own well-being and food preferences, while helping them to understand why some choices are healthier than others.



What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.