

# HEALTHY RISK TAKING FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Have you ever wondered what healthy risk taking is? And, how do you as a parent or one in a parenting role support healthy risk taking and help your young child avoid taking unhealthy risks?

Risk taking is a normal part of a young child's development. Unhealthy risks are those that can result in serious and long-term consequences. Risk taking is an essential part of identity development.

- Risk taking is about a child finding out who they are and exploring boundaries.
- Risk taking is not about a child being rebellious.

## **Ways to Support Healthy Risk Taking**

### **Provide healthy options and alternatives**

- Explore at a playground
- Try new activities or new foods
- Play pretend together and let them be the leader and teach you

### **Model and label positive behavior because your behavior influences your child**

- Discuss with your young child the positive behaviors you choose and why.
  - *"Did you notice I stopped and looked both ways before we crossed the street? I did that to make sure it was safe for us to cross."*



## Talk with your child about risk taking and healthy decision making

Notice when your young child is engaging in a healthy or unhealthy risk and engage them in a conversation to prompt their thinking and encourage or redirect them when needed.

- *"Do you remember us talking about always wearing a helmet when you ride your bike? A helmet is important to protect you in case you fall. Please go get your helmet, and I will help you put it on before you ride your bike."*
- *"That merry-go-round is going too fast right now. You will be able to play on the merry-go-round when you are older."* Redirect their focus to a more age-appropriate option. *"Have you tried the swing? Can you run really fast to the swing and I'll meet you there?"*

## Monitor and stay involved

- A child's interactions with you are important for increasing their sense of security and for learning about themselves and their emotions. Play with them, watch them, hold them, and express love up close. Children learn by interacting with you.

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