

pounds) at 5 years old. The average weight gain per year remains approximately 2 to 3 kg (4.5 to 6.5 pounds).

Growth in height also remains steady, with a yearly increase of 6.5 to 9 cm (2.5 to 3.5 inches), and generally occurs by elongation of the legs rather than of the trunk. The average height is 95 cm (37.5 inches) at 3 years old, 103 cm (40.5 inches) at 4 years old, and 110 cm (43.5 inches) at 5 years old.

Physical proportions no longer resemble those of the squat, pot-bellied toddler. Preschoolers are slender but sturdy, graceful, agile, and posturally erect. There is little difference in physical characteristics according to gender except as dictated by such factors as dress and hairstyle.

Most organ systems can adjust to moderate stress and change. During this period, most children are toilet trained. For the most part, motor development consists of increases in strength and refinement of previously learned skills, such as walking, running, and jumping. However, muscle development and bone growth are still far from mature. Excessive activity and overexertion can injure delicate tissues. Good posture, appropriate exercise, and adequate nutrition and rest are essential for optimal development of the musculoskeletal system.

Gross and Fine Motor Skills

Walking, running, climbing, and jumping are well established by 36 months old. Refinement in eye-hand and muscle coordination is evident in several areas. At 3 years old, preschoolers can ride a tricycle, walk on tiptoe, balance on one foot for a few seconds, and do broad jumps. By 4 years old, children can skip and hop proficiently on one foot (Fig. 12-1) and catch a ball reliably. By 5 years old, children can skip on alternate feet and jump rope and begin to skate and swim.