Physical Development in Early Childhood

PSY 356
Dr. Schuetze

Growth

• Slower overall rate of growth
• 2-3 inches per year
• 5 ½ pounds per year
• Body proportions change
  – Torso and legs are longer
  – Flatter stomach

Brain Development

• Rapid brain growth
  – Increased myelination
  – Growth of glial cells: specialized cells that hold neurons together, provide nourishment, remove waste products and form the myelin sheath
• Overabundance of synapses in brain
  – Synaptic pruning
  – 100,000 synapses lost every second during childhood
Brain Development

• Experience expectant: synapses are formed early in development, the pruned based on actual experience
• Experience dependent: synapses are formed as experiences occur

Brain Development

• Stimulating environments promote useful pruning of existing synapses and growth of new synapses

Gross Motor Skills

• Balance
  – Stand on one foot
  – Balance beam
  – Peddle bicycle
  – Hop, jump, skip

• Locomotor
  – Walk
  – Run
  – Climb
  – Throw
  – Catch
  – Kick
Fine Motor Skills

• Lag behind gross-motor skills
• Learning to:
  – Draw
  – Write
  – Cut
  – String beads
  – Tie shoes
  – Zip
  – Button