

Physiotherapy Services

LEARN TO MOVE . MOVE TO LEARN

clever • skilled • creative

Gross Motor Skills

The following list of activities have been recommended as beneficial to the development of gross motor skills. The activities serve only as ideas for improving gross motor skills and should not be seen as comprehensive. If you have concerns about your child's motor development, please speak with you child's teacher who can seek professional advice from a Physiotherapist who will assess your child and determine which activities are appropriate for your child.



What are gross motor skills and why are they important?

Gross motor skills are those that enable us to move efficiently, to negotiate our environment, to balance, to run, jump, play games and with balls and more.

Gross motor skill development goes hand in hand with development of speech and fine motor skills.

Good gross motor skills stem from having developed good sensory-motor skills - especially body and limb awareness and motor planning skills - something which we develop from birth and continue to develop right throughout our life span.

Good gross motor skills and body awareness are important for good posture, movement around the school, participation in games and sports and for general fitness, health and wellbeing



Sensory motor and Motor Planning

Problems with motor planning may present as – slowness in comprehending directions, hesitancy when confronted with new tasks or poor organization of the body.

Sensory motor is an area which covers your senses and the movement responses to them. Senses are touch, joint position sense, body position in space, awareness of movement, vision, hearing taste and smell. Deficiencies in these areas can affect the way we move and how we function in the classroom. For example, poor eye movement can result in decreased ability to track along a line to read or copying from the blackboard while poor awareness in joints can lead to jerky less controlled movements or decrease of balance and less automatic movement.



Balance Activities

Aimed at improving standing and walking balance.

- Walking along a narrow beam or line marked on the ground – forwards, backwards, sideways
- Stand on one leg – can put one foot on a phone book, a ball if unable to hold balance and for fun try picking up marbles with one foot while standing on the other - place into container!
- Stepping up and down or from one box/bucket to another
- Walking along different surfaces – eg pillows, foam, mattress etc
- Balance on wobble or balance board
- Walking on toes and on heels
- Follow a wiggly line – walk on line or feet either side
- Stepping over rungs of a (horizontal) ladder or on the rungs or along the edges



Jumping and Hopping

- Jump on spot, jump forwards from a line two feet together
- Jump over progressively higher stick/bar/obstacle
- Jump down from a progressively higher height
- Jump from hoop to hoop, circle to circle, over a rope – stationary or moving (snakes)
- Jump sideways – back and forth, forwards and back
- Hop on spot or hop forwards progress to hopping sideways



Ball Skills/Eye Hand Coordination

Ball skills are excellent hand eye skills – development of these skills can carry over into classroom activities.

- Catching a ball – start with 20cm ball and reduce to handball – start by throwing or bouncing ball directly to child, then as skill improves – throw in air, to sides etc to make harder
- Throwing a ball – throw overarm, underarm and chest passes – progress to throwing through a hoop or at a target then into a basketball hoop
- Kick a ball – once can kick, try dribbling ball around obstacles or kick at a target/goal
- Hit a ball – start with a ball on a T or a stationary suspended ball, hitting with hand or bat then progress to a moving ball
- Games are – skittles, scoop ball, grip ball, balloon games – hitting with hand or bat, beanbag toss, quoits
- Ball games such as sevens, tens, handball, t-ball, kanga cricket.



Core Strength



These activities are important for posture and to enable good development of motor skills. Core strength refers to strength in muscles of back, tummy, hips and shoulders that stabilize the body to allow good posture and movement.

- All fours – lifting one arm at a time, one leg at a time and then progress to lifting an arm on one side while lifting the opposite leg. Arm and leg being lifted should be straight
- Kneeling – pushing a partner or throw and catch a ball
- Kneeling on one knee with other foot forward – (half kneeling) – do same activities as above
- Bridging – lying on back with knees bent and feet flat below knees – lift bottom up till tummy flat – hold and count or can roll a ball under bottom!
- Standing on one leg – hold balance while change position of arms – stand tall like a tree!
- Lunges- from standing – take a big step forward with one leg and slowly lower knee of back leg to hover above the ground – hold. Step back and repeat.
- Bear walk – stand on hands and feet – head down and bottom up – walk forwards on hands and feet.
- Crab walk – sit on floor with hands on floor behind and feet flat on floor in front, lift bottom up and walk hands and feet backwards or forwards keeping bottom off the floor.

General Strength

- Tug of war games (upper limb and core strength)
- Wall squat – stand with back against wall and feet out in front a step. Slowly slide down the wall till knees are nearly at right angle – hold for as long as can. (quadriceps strength)
- Play with heavy ball or fitball – catch, bounce, push (upper limb and core strength)
- Step-ups – step up and back down on a step – do a number of times (lower limb strength)
- Wheelbarrows – walking on hands while feet are held (legs straight) (upper limb strength)



Motor Planning and Sensory Motor

- Obstacle courses, climbing and negotiating playground equipment. (motor plan)
- Visual copy games like follow the leader (motor plan)
- Verbal copy games such as Simon Says (motor plan)
- Statues, freeze games, pretending to be... games (motor plan)
- Bouncing on a trampoline – jump on feet, bounce on knees, all fours and on hands (body awareness)
- Galloping and skipping, skip with a rope, hopscotch (motor plan)
- Dancing and actions to music (motor plan)
- Bouncing and doing actions on a fitball (body awareness and motor plan)
- Wheelbarrows as above (upper limb awareness)
- Scooter board – pull on tummy or with feet in sitting, negotiate obstacles (motor plan and awareness)
- Swing and spin often help with whole body awareness.



Physiotherapy helps children develop their motor skills and enables them to achieve to their maximum potential. If your child has a problem with motor skills or has delayed motor development, ask to have your child assessed by the Education Department Physiotherapist.

There are many activities and games that can be used for the whole class to improve various motor skills – these can be obtained via your Physiotherapist.

