

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Gross motor skills refer to large movement patterns involving the whole body such as walking, running, jumping, and hopping. These skills develop from birth, e.g. rolling, crawling and become more complex e.g. swimming, bike riding and participating in sports. Effective gross motor skills are important for developing fine motor skills. Difficulties with gross motor skills might include; poor co-ordination, poor balance, difficulty with hand eye coordination tasks and movements that lack fluency.

COMPONENTS OF GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

- **Muscle Tone:** When muscle tone is low, muscles are more relaxed and the young person may appear floppy. Difficulties in this area may include using increased effort to achieve movement; difficulties controlling and co-ordinating movement, tiring easily, leaning over desk, slouching in their seat.
- **Balance:** Difficulties in this area may include poor saving reactions, poor balance, poor posture. This can often be seen through difficulties in activities such as riding a bike, participating in team games or gymnastics at school or even just sitting still.
- **Proprioception:** Refers to the sensation received from the muscles and joints, which helps us to be aware of where our body parts are in space. Difficulties in this area may include body and spatial awareness, judging force, e.g. when throwing a ball, kicking a ball and general difficulties in gross and fine motor skills
- **Joint Instability:** Refers to the increased movements around joints. It can occur at any joint in the body and can affect your child's fluency of movement and co-ordination making them appear awkward. Difficulties can also include poor body awareness, tiring easily and complaining of pain around the joint.
- **Motor Planning:** Refers to the ability to organise movement including: Forming the idea and knowing what to do, organising the sequence of movements involved in task and carrying out the planned movements smoothly.
- **Bilateral Integration:** Refers to the ability to co-ordinate both sides of the body together. Your dominant hand or leg leads the activity and the other supports, this is important for functional everyday tasks such as dressing, cutlery, buttons, handwriting.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Many young people with co-ordination difficulties may find PE, in particular team games, challenging – provide alternative choice when possible.
- Peer support e.g. buddy system for carrying dining tray or transporting equipment between classes.
- Encourage attendance at groups, youth clubs etc. e.g. Tae Kwondo, swimming etc.
- Be aware that fatigue and tolerance levels may be considerably lower in comparison to peers.
- Give alternative role e.g. time keeper, score keeper etc.
- Accommodate without being obvious, focus on areas of success.
- Consider how the task could be graded to provide the just right challenge e.g. if a small ball is difficult try a larger ball first.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

MUSCLE TONE:

- Prone 'tummy time' activities – complete activities whilst lying on tummy to strengthen the muscles that are involved in straightening the trunk.
- Rolling in to a ball (supine activities) - lie on their back, curl head and legs up into a ball, with arms crossed in front of chest. When your child's skills improve they can pretend to be a 'jellybean' and can rock from side to side and back and forwards.
- High kneeling and half kneeling positions
- Animal walks – crab, bear, frog, bunny hops
- Wheelbarrow walking – hold child at hips or knees if more support is required initially.

BALANCE:

- Walking on uneven surface e.g. stepping stones, gym mats
- Standing on one leg for as long as possible
- Musical Statues- move around the room to music –the idea is that when the music stops you also stop and be as still as you can.

- Beanbag Balance- place a beanbag on their head and walk in a straight line whilst attempting to keep beanbag on their head. If the child finds this easy create an obstacle course of items that they have to weave around.

PROPRIOCEPTION:

- Any activity against resistance e.g. tug-of war, carrying heavy books / bags and swimming
- Helping round house e.g. hoovering, making bed, moving small furniture
- Digging in sand or small gravel and carrying buckets of sand or gravel and any other gardening tasks.
- Bouncing on space hopper or small trampoline or therapy ball.
- Crawling activities – e.g. through a tunnel, being commandos.

JOINT STABILITY:

- Push ups on wall, floor and chair
- Press ups
- Sit ups
- Commando crawling

MOTOR PLANNING:

- Games like Twister
- Obstacle Courses
 - Provide demonstration and allow child to repeat.
 - Allow child to plan course, given equipment.
 - Allow child to choose equipment, plan obstacle course and demonstrate.
- Imitation games – have child copy postures. Stand or sit facing the child. Include various movements, bending sideways, back, forward, stand on toes, heels, touching body parts, crossing sides of the body, fingers, head etc.

BILATERAL INTEGRATION:

- Swimming
- Star jumps
- Cycling
- Bat and Ball Games