

Children's Occupational Therapy Service

Practical Suggestions to Manage Vestibular (Movement) Seeking behaviours that support participation in everyday activities

A child may seek all kinds of movement while engaged in daily routines. Sometimes this can impact on daily routines e.g. can't sit still, fidgets. They seem to always be "on the go". For example the kinds of movement activities they engage in are; being whirled about by adult, merry go rounds, playground equipment, moving toys and swings. Twirl/spin self frequently throughout the day and their tolerance for this feeling may be higher than their peers and may not appear dizzy. Some children use movement to support their focus and attention and it is about finding ways that are acceptable in the given situation.

Suggestions

- Carry out activities little and often, rather than for prolonged periods of time to ensure that your child does not become over excited
- Alternate periods of sitting with periods of movement. For example, if sitting down to read a book; engage in a physical movement activity beforehand. Run errands, e.g. fetch something from upstairs or help set the table, before sitting down for meals.
- At school, run errands for the teacher in between tasks e.g. taking a note to the office or collecting in jotters.

Your child may also rock unconsciously e.g. while watching TV; rocks in desk/chair/on floor.

Rocking may be calming for your child as the repetitive slow motion of moving back and forth may be helping to calm their sensory system so they can focus on other tasks e.g. watching TV.

- Engage your child in movement activities that move in a straight line, e.g. a rocking chair as you only move back and forth or a trampoline as you only move up and down, for when they need to be calm and settled.

They may also...

Take excessive risks during play e.g. climb high into a tree, jump off tall furniture.

Take movement or climbing risks during play that compromise personal safety.

Seek opportunity to fall without regard to personal safety.

Appear to enjoy falling.

Avoid quiet play activities.

Become overly excitable during movement activities.

- Monitor how much movement input your child is experiencing and what kind of activities they are engaging in when they become overly excitable. They may not be registering when they have had enough movement and may be experiencing too much at any given time.
- Deep pressure may be required to help calm and settle your child (see Heavy Work & Deep Pressure to support participation in everyday activities).

Your child may jump from one activity to another so that it interferes with play or school. You could try:

- Break down activities that your child is less interested in into smaller, more manageable chunks so your child can learn to finish activities and feel a sense of accomplishment and completion.
-

- Use a Movin' Sit or Disc O Sit cushion to improve concentration and posture at a table top activities by providing additional movement when sitting down. You could also allow them to stand at the table to complete work.
- Use timers to help remain longer at and complete activities.
- Use a reward chart to help motivate a child to want to remain at activities for longer.
- Provide deep pressure just before any type of sit-down activity to help calm and prepare the body to sit down and concentrate.

See also 'Strategies to help with sitting still and fidgeting'.