



PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Every child, regardless of disability or ability, should engage in physical activity. By engaging in physical activity children can increase skeletal development, increase heart and lung health, improve functional movements and social with peers. Exercise should be fun and engaging, whether modified or not and provide an outlet for children with disabilities to discover their true potential. Having a disability is not a reason for children not to engage in physical activity.

If you have any concerns about your child and exercise please contact an Accredited Exercise Physiologist who can guide you in development an appropriate exercise program.

Before exercising always check with an accredited exercise physiologist.

Why it's important to exercise

Carefully supervised exercise can help any child with a disability in a number of ways including improved cardiovascular health, stronger muscles and bones, reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis and type 2 diabetes. Physical activity also helps your child gain independence and build self-confidence.

Children should embrace their disability and participate in as many physical activities as possible. Providing appropriate role models in the disability field (such as Paralympians) assists in building self-confidence and reassurance. All children should have the aspiration to be great at something.

Things to remember:

- Allow children to engage in multiple activities to discover true likes and dislikes. Ensure that goals are functional rather than objectively focussed.
- There are opportunities to participate in both fully-abled and modified physical activities. Ensure that your child has the opportunity to engage in sports/activities that are appropriate for your child's ability.
- Education and motivation around the child's ability is essential to promote self-confidence in social contexts.
- Seek the advice of an Accredited Exercise Physiologist if you have any concerns.

Types of exercise recommended:

- Some great exercises for children with physical disabilities are boxing and swimming and water aerobics. Boxing and swimming promote increased upper arm function and strength as well as cardiovascular endurance.
- Fun activities include programs such as the Wii. The Wii offers activities using just your hands so those who are in a wheel chair can participate. Games include boxing, tennis, baseball, and bowling. This is a great way to get the entire family involved and keep your child moving.
- It is important to note that children with physical disabilities can participate in most sports. Sports can be fun to play and can give your child an emotional boost. To find sports your child can engage in, ask other parents, teachers, doctors and therapists as they are often aware of programs available to help your child. Once you find a program, always have your child try it out. Not all programs will work for everyone. Find one that your child feels comfortable joining and enjoys to do.

References:

1. Specific Ideas for Child Care Providers to Help Children with Physical Disabilities. Extension. 2015. articles.extension.org
2. Holecko, Catherine. Sports for Children with Physical Disabilities. 2016. Very Well. www.verywell.com
3. How to Exercise with Disabled or Weak Legs. Dr Gourmet. www.drgourmet.com
4. Chair Exercises and Limited Mobility Fitness. Help Guide. help.guide.org

Find your local accredited exercise physiologist at www.exerciseright.com.au

