

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Schools Physiotherapy Team
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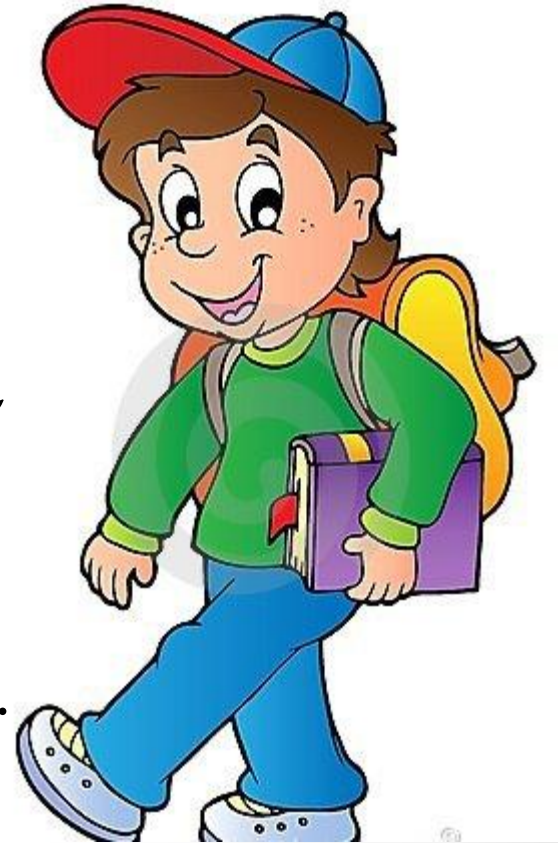
What are gross motor skills

- Gross motor skills are those that require whole body movement and which involve the large (core stabilizing) muscles to perform everyday tasks such as:
 - Walking
 - Running
 - Sitting upright
 - Standing
 - Also includes eye-hand coordination such as ball skills (throwing/catching/kicking)

Why are they important

Enable children to perform everyday functions

- Running, skipping, walking
- Playground skills e.g climbing
- Sports skills e.g catching, throwing, hitting a ball with a bat
- Self care skills e.g dressing
- Posture in sitting can impact participation in fine motor skills e.g. writing, drawing, cutting and attention within class
- Endurance for a full day at school.



Developing Gross Motor Skills

- There are a number of elements that provide the building blocks to develop Gross Motor Skills these include
- Muscle Strength, endurance and tone
- Motor planning and learning
- Postural/Core Stability
- Sensory Processing
- Body Awareness
- Balance and Coordination
- Midline crossing
- Joint Proprioception.

What can be done to
improve gross motor skills

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Elements Required for performing Gross Motor activities

- Core stability
- Balance
- Coordination
- Eye/Hand Co-ordination
- Eye/Foot Co-ordination
- Strength and endurance

Core Stability

- Large central muscles provide trunk stability.
- Important to maintain upright posture in sitting and standing
- Important to maintain balance

Exercises that can help

- Wheelbarrow walking (where the child 'walks' on their hands and adults hold their feet off the ground)- develop upper body strength
- Obstacle courses- unstable surfaces/straight lines/walking on knees/1/2 kneeling (1 leg in front), this can include pillows, keeping feet close together, doing activities at table on knees or 1/2 kneeling, you can incorporate sensory activities such as messy play/ inset boards/schoolwork.

- Animal walks
 - Bear (walking on hand and feet with bum in the air)
 - Kangaroo- jumping feet together
 - ,crab in sitting with knees bent and hands behind- lift bum (YouTube crab walk)
 - frog,- jumping from low position and landing back in a low position
 - crocodile- commando crawling
- Aeroplanes/ Superman either Plank positions or 4 point kneeling- start with single arm or leg raise it can be progressed to opposite for arm and leg with 5 sec hold

Elbow plank, where your child uses their elbows/forearms and toes for support, make sure their back is straight, and their bottom doesn't slouch down or extend upward.
- Press ups/ sit ups- press ups can be done against the wall, or on knees
- Playground Equipment
 - Swings
 - Climbing
 - Monkey bars
 - Slides and poles

Balance

ability to hold your body upright and steady without falling down

Exercises that can help:
Obstacle courses

Kneeling activities (high kneeling (on knees) and $\frac{1}{2}$ kneeling (1 leg in front))

Static- colouring in a picture, dynamic- passing a ball or balloon

Yoga/Pilates- these can be viewed online



- Hopscotch
- Simon Says games
- Stepping stones
- Scooter/Bike
- Standing on one leg (static/dynamic)
- Walking along a line
- Heel/toe walking
- Walking on tiptoes
- 'Freeze' games

Coordination

- Arms and legs work together in a coordinated and effective way
- Bilateral coordination: both sides of the body together like pulling yourself up a rope
- Exercises to promote coordination include:
 - 2 feet jumps landing with balance,
 - Jumps in all directions,
 - Star jumps,
 - Crosscrawl marching,
 - Space hopper



- Swimming
- Crawling,
- Handclapping games
- Dance DVD's,
- Dribbling a ball with hand/feet
- Bouncing a ball with 1 hand then alternate hands
- Hopscotch
- Running around obstacles
- Climbing over/under

Hand-eye & Eye-foot coordination

- Bubbles, balloons, beachball, scarves, different sized balls for throw/catch and bounce/catch
- Practise dribbling ball with 1 hand then either hand/with foot
- Skittles, bowls, basketball, batting games, table football, children's darts, swing ball
- Trap and kick a ball with either foot
- Aiming ball at target with hands or feet



In Summary

- Physical activity should be included into a child's daily routine as standard
- Reduce the time spent on sofa and screen time i.e. for t.v, xbox, computer....use different positions rather than slouching on sofa
- Encourage children to play outside if safe
- Park, swimming, cycling, scooter, walks

- **IMPORTANT NOTE**

- Encouraging gross motor skills requires a safe, open play space and adult supervision at all times. Helping a child succeed in gross motor tasks requires patience and opportunities for a child to practise desired skills.
- Remember, each child is an individual and children develop at different rates. You know your child best so ensure the activity is aimed at an appropriate level for him/her and provide supervision/assistance at all times.