

## Introduction

Good dynamic balance requires:

- Joint stability
- Postural control in the trunk and pelvis
- Static balance
- Body awareness
- Spatial awareness

Dynamic balance enables us to maintain our balance and move through space effectively whilst completing activities of choice.

A child with difficulties with dynamic balance may appear clumsy, always bumping into things or people or falling regularly. The child with these difficulties may lose his balance easily or appear to move excessively, using momentum to compensate for poor balance reactions.

A child with poor dynamic balance may also be overly frightened by movement. He may not be able to keep up with his peers in the playground and may have difficulty mastering environmental obstacles such as stairs or uneven terrain. He may become fearful, stubborn or so overly stimulated by movement that his behaviour becomes a problem.

## Activities

### • **Obstacle course**

Make an obstacle course around the room. Have things to crawl under (e.g. a duvet lying flat), through (e.g. a cardboard box with the ends open), around (e.g. a chair or stuffed toy), under (e.g. a table), over (e.g. a bed). Talk the child through the obstacle course and ask them to describe what they are doing.

### • **Stepping stones**

Use paper plates on the floor or mats/large stones in the outdoor play area. Encourage the child to follow a footprint path. Start with the stepping stones close together and gradually spread them out to make the activity more challenging. Experiment with using objects of different heights to increase the challenge.

### • **Utilise playground equipment:**

Slides - Encourage the child to go down the slide on their tummy, head first or feet first, as well as just sliding down in the normal way.

Swings - If the child is old enough let them go on their tummy on the swing. Whilst in this position get them to push balls to you or knock over skittles.

bars is highly beneficial if the facilities are available to do this.

Climbing apparatus – encourage climbing as it helps develop body awareness and balance.

### • **Animal Walks**

Play games where the child has to mimic the way that animals walk, such as walking like a crab, a bear or a duck. You can make this into a group activity to music to make it more fun.

### • **Jumping games**

Encourage bouncing and jumping on a trampoline. Encourage the child to practice jumping down from a step, into puddles and into squares that can be drawn on the paving stones with chalk. This can be progressed to jump-scotch and then hopscotch. Playing these games to music or making them team games can make them enjoyable for every child.

### • **Play rolling games**

Roll the child up in a duvet, piece of fur or bubble wrap (with head and feet out). Then unroll them onto a soft surface by pulling the end. Practice rolling over piles of cushions. Roll over to knock a target down (e.g. skittles or empty cardboard boxes).



### Strategies

- Place a beanbag or weighted lap cushion on the child's lap to add resistance and increase body awareness.
- The child does not always need to be seated for table top tasks. Try activities whilst lying on tummy, in high or half kneeling and standing at a table as these positions will help to improve body awareness.
- Prepare the child's sensory system prior to fine motor activity by providing a brief period of group aerobics e.g. jumping on the spot, circle arms, push hands together and wriggle fingers.
- Present prewriting activities on a vertical surface using a chalk board, easel, white board or paper taped to the wall. This promotes improved upper limb awareness.
- Trial adapted scissors and pen grips.
- Trial a move n sit cushion to increase awareness of posture whilst sitting. Try using a carpet square to define a space for remaining seated.
- Using a table with a cut out for additional side support.

### Frequency of activities

Engage the child with activities from this programme for up to 15 minutes for 3 focused sessions a week. Simply adjusting your current activities and encouraging the child's participation in activities they would not usually choose will support development.

### Complete activities from this sheet for 3 months

### Improving our service

We continue to review our service to make sure that it meets the needs of those who are using it. We would appreciate any suggestions on how we may improve and also comments on what was good about the service.

If you have any compliments, suggestions or complaints, please write to or contact any member of staff in the first instance, or to the Occupational Therapy Service Lead if necessary.

**Contact details: see part 1 of pack**

## USING MY SENSES BODY AWARENESS

### Early Years Activity Sheet

### PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES