



Tips for Encouraging Physical Activity and Fitness for Children with Motor Coordination Challenges

Encouragement of an active lifestyle provides opportunities for:

- Physical and social development
- Promotion of fun and participation
- Continued participation in lifestyle sports with associated health benefits into adulthood
- Prevent secondary consequences such as poor or deteriorating physical fitness
- Improvements in fitness levels and prevention of secondary consequences, such as poor health and obesity
- Improvements in muscle strength and overall endurance
- Improvements in body awareness, flexibility, and balance

How can we encourage children with motor coordination challenges to be active?

Selecting activities that are more likely to be successful with an emphasis on fun and participation are important. Children with motor challenges tend to have more success with individual sports or physical activities than with team sports.

Activities that are likely to be more successful and should be encouraged include:

- Activities that don't require constant monitoring of feedback during performance of the task
- Activities involving patterns of movement that repeat themselves over and over again

Individual sports

- Promote individual progress, effort, and participation.
- Participants can concentrate on their own bodies in relation to the environment without worrying about maneuvering around other moving parts or people
 - Dance
 - Martial Arts
 - Gymnastics
 - Horseback riding
 - Yoga

Lifestyle sports

- These activities are worth extra time and effort to learn as they allow participation throughout lifetime.
 - Swimming
 - Skating
 - Skiing
 - Running
 - Bicycling
 - Rollerblading
 - Hiking
 - Paddling (canoeing, kayaking)

Activities that are likely to be more challenging include:

- Activities requiring constant monitoring and integrating feedback during task performance (changing circumstances, moving balls and people, having to respond quickly with body changes)
- Tasks with a high level of unpredictability
- Higher level more competitive activities requiring difficult balance requirements or complex steps
- Organized sporting activities involving multiple players
 - Baseball
 - Hockey
 - Football
 - Basketball

Other considerations:

- Keep it positive - The goal of participation in physical activity is for your child to have fun and stay fit for life!
- It is important to be aware that children with coordination challenges may take longer to reach increasing skill levels than other children of the same age, so extra support or individual lessons may be needed.
- Some of the more challenging sports and activities can be worked on if a child is really motivated to do so
- Coordination challenges increase the likelihood of injuries during certain physical activities. Wearing recommended safety equipment, such as helmets, padding, wrist guards, and having the appropriate supervision is important.

If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with your School Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist.

References: <https://canchild.ca/en/resources/122-encouraging-participation-in-physical-activities-for-children-with-developmental-coordination-disorder>