

Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



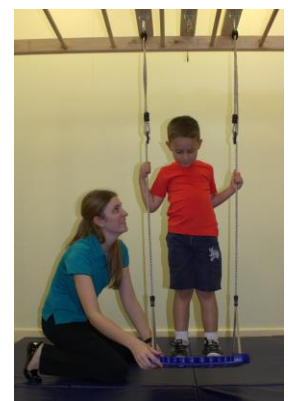
Increasing vestibular input

Most of us are aware of our five primary senses, sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. In fact, we have more than five senses. The vestibular sense, which is input from the inner ear, is our centre for balance. It detects our head position and body movements including up/down, back/forth, and side to side movements. It also provides information about whether we are moving fast, slowly or standing still, and whether objects are moving or still in relation to our body. If this sensory system is 'under registering' sensory input it can alter the way we perceive our body position and lead us to seek extra vestibular input to help us feel regulated (calm and comfortable).



Children who experience difficulties with their vestibular input may find the following strategies helpful in their day to day life

- ☺ Encourage them to regularly change positions during work e.g. Have them move between sitting and lying.
- ☺ Encourage position changes that result in movement in their head position.
- ☺ Make sure somebody watches them on the playground or at heights because they are at a higher risk of falls due to poor balance.
- ☺ Ensure they understand the physical boundaries when lining up or working in groups.
- ☺ Point out uneven surfaces to them when out in the community as they are more likely to trip up with changes in floor level.
- ☺ Children's vestibular systems have direct effects on their alertness and activity level. You can use slow, rocking movements for calming, and faster, rotational movements for increasing their attention and engagement.
- ☺ Introduce new or extra movement opportunities slowly and never force a child to do movements they don't feel comfortable or capable of.
- ☺ Avoid over stimulation. Signs your child may be becoming over stimulated include increased heart rate, dilated pupils, nausea, alarm reactions, over excitement, nightmares, seizures, child asking for the activity to stop, sweatiness, becoming pale/flushed. It is important that you stop activities before the child becomes nauseous and dizzy.
- ☺ If the child is epileptic, avoid spinning/circular movements and observe carefully their reaction to linear (forward/backward, side to side) stimulation.



Activity Ideas:

Below are a number of activities that you can complete with your children to increase the amount of vestibular input they are receiving.



- ☺ Get your child to hang upside down on monkey bars
- ☺ Complete an obstacle course which could involve climbing, jumping and rolling activities. Use what resources you have available. Encourage your child to run or hop around the course.
- ☺ Balance on a wobble board while throwing and catching a beanbag or ball.
- ☺ Encourage your child to lie over a gym ball while they push and pulls against your hands. Rock your child on the gym ball while holding on to their legs whilst they lay prone (on tummy) and supine (on back).
- ☺ Pretend to be a bird by running on tiptoes, slowing down, then landing on a perch
- ☺ Roll your child up in a blanket while they are lying on the floor, then unroll them.
- ☺ Do some trampoline exercises, such as jumping, kneeling, sitting, turning.
- ☺ Encourage your child to do some skipping with hoops or ropes.
- ☺ Get your child to jump over a “snake” (wiggling rope).
- ☺ Encourage your child to use playground equipment, such as swings and slides.
- ☺ Encourage your child to do some bicycle riding or scooter riding.
- ☺ Have your child swing him/herself by touching ground with hands, pushing off from a wall, pulling on a rope, or pretending to row a boat using a broom handle
- ☺ Encourage your child to swing on a swing. Whilst swinging the child can play target games such as quoits, beanbag toss, or throwing and catching a ball.
- ☺ Have your child play “Tarzan” by swinging from a rope on a safe tree.
- ☺ Get your child to sit with their feet in the middle of a tyre and bound around it.
- ☺ Have your child roll in a barrel while they play “Barrel Bowling” and try to knock down skittles.
- ☺ Get your child to sit on a scooter-board whilst you spin them around while they are holding on to a hoop. You could also get your child to spin him/herself around on the scooter-board, or have a scooter-board race together!

