

ASD Family Help

Your local Autism Support Charity

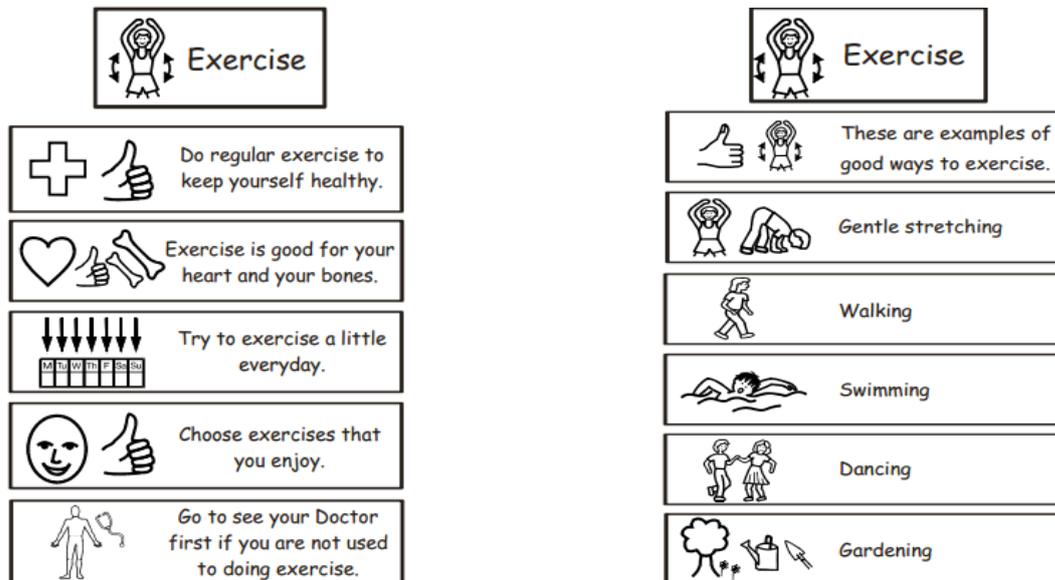


Exercise



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http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/exercise_1.pdf



<http://www.autism-help.org/family-physical-exercise-autism.htm>

Physical exercise benefits any child, but it has particular benefits for children on the autism spectrum who experience problems with communication abilities, social skills, and behaviour. This can show in problems with:

- Fine motor skills
- Sensory integration issues
- Poor attention span
- Poor coordination
- Visual tracking of moving objects
- Slow reaction times.

Despite its many benefits, exercise is often overlooked by parents due to their own inactive lifestyle or being too busy. But when physical exercise is cheap, safe, and healthy, it should be one of the first interventions for a child on the autism spectrum. Motivating your child may be difficult at first, and you may need to shape the exercise around an interest they have. Once it forms part of the child's routine, motivation is usually no longer a problem.

Team sports would have to be carefully considered due to complexities of team work and communication that may overwhelm a child on the autism spectrum. However,

with the right timing this can be part of your child's education and development of social skills.

Ideally you should incorporate time into your lifestyle to exercise with your child. Below are some useful kinds of exercise for different issues arising from Autism Spectrum Disorders.

PROPRIOCEPTIVE SYSTEM

The Proprioceptive System helps children (and adults) to locate their bodies in space. Autistic children often have poor proprioception and will need help to develop their coordination. Therapy may include playing with weights, bouncing on a trampoline or a large ball, skipping or pushing heavy objects.

VESTIBULAR SYSTEM

The Vestibular System is located in our inner ear. It responds to movement and gravity and is therefore involved with our sense of balance, coordination and eye movements. Therapy can include hanging upside down, rocking chairs, swings, spinning, rolling, somersaulting, cartwheels and dancing. All these activities involve the head moving in different ways that stimulate the vestibular system. Be careful to observe the child carefully to be sure the movement is not over stimulating.

Back and forth movement appears less stimulating than side-to-side movement. The most stimulating movement tends to be rotational (spinning) and should be used carefully. Ideally activities will provide a variety of these movements. A rocking motion will usually calm a child while vigorous motions like spinning will stimulate them. Merry-go-rounds, being tossed on to cushions or jumping trampolines can be real favourites with some children. Experimenting and careful introduction of each activity is the way to go.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS INVOLVING MOVEMENT

Skills such as tying shoe laces or riding a bike can be difficult as they involve sequences of movements. Therapy to help in this area may use swimming, mazes, obstacle courses, constructional toys and building blocks.

DIFFICULTY WITH USING BOTH SIDES OF THE BODY TOGETHER

Crawling, hopscotch, skipping, playing musical instruments, playing catch and bouncing balls with both hands are some of the many activities that can help with bilateral integration.

HAND AND EYE COORDINATION

Activities may include hitting with a bat, popping bubbles, throwing and catching balls, beanbags and balloons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreational sports may have health benefits, may be an enjoyable leisure activity for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and, in some cases, may help prevent problem behaviour such as aggression. Sports also may afford opportunities for socialization, particularly if peers who have been taught to serve as tutors or models are available during the activity.