**Motor Skills**

Here are some practical ideas and activities to help support your child/ young person to develop their gross motor skills. All references to child / children mean either a child or young person.

Gross motor skills are large movements your child makes with their arms, legs, feet, or entire body. For example, crawling, running and jumping are gross motor skills.

Gross motor skills can be challenging for many children for a number of reasons:

* Lack of experience or practice.
* Difficulty using two sides of the body together (bilateral integration).
* Reduced balance caused by poor core stability.
* Difficulty planning and organising themselves to follow instructions.
* Poor spatial (space) awareness skills.

In many cases, supporting a child on a regular basis to practice gross motor activities should encourage their skills to improve.

Games and activities can be introduced to your child at any time throughout the day. Try to create lots of opportunities as this can be very helpful for your child’s gross motor development.

**Remember…**

1. Regular practice (five to ten minutes each day) will help your child improve their skills.
2. Encourage your child by providing praise and encouragement for their efforts and success.
3. Start easy and gradually make tasks more difficult for example, if your child is having difficulty with knowing where parts of his/her body are knowing left and right, start by doing activities which focus on body parts. Once this is known, start introducing left and right.
4. Make it fun!

Planning and organisation

Sometimes it can be difficult to do the things we want to do. Sometimes it can be very hard to think of an idea, organise and then sequence and carry out unfamiliar and complex body movements in a co-ordinated manner. Here are a few pointers.

Motor planning tips when learning new things

* Consistency – Practice new tasks in the same place with the same materials each time.
* Repetition – Repeat the same task for several days or even weeks, with each repetition, remain consistent.
* Demonstration – In group situations, allow the child to watch his/her peers complete a task first. This will provide the child with a visual demonstration and more time to learn how to do the activity.
* Support verbal instructions with visual demonstration.
* Even if you are only extending a task or changing it slightly, assume that the child is learning a whole new task from the beginning.
* Encourage the child to talk his way through an activity for the first few times, create rhymes, this will help the child develop their planning and doing skills.
* Clear short instructions – Use only one command at a time.
* Go at the child’s pace – If a child is not ready or willing to learn a skill, it will be much harder to teach. Teach one step at a time making sure the child has some success no matter how small.
* Praise all efforts – Often a child will put huge amounts of effort and still not complete a task successfully. It is important to praise efforts rather than results.

1. Try to balance assistance and independence – Encourage the child to do as much as they can for themselves. Provide opportunities for activities that are matched to the child’s needs and abilities. Consider activities that are not competitive, self-paced, and group-optional, as these can help boost self-confidence. Some children do better learning new skills individually or in small groups before joining a larger group. Choose the best environment to help the child learn.