

# GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

For the average child there are many steps to acquiring gross motor skills - developing from lying on the floor, crawling or shuffling to walking, running, hopping, skipping and jumping. An important milestone is the ability to standing on one leg - this allows the child to put on a sock, adjust underwear, kick a ball and take part in sports. Children develop at different rates, a child with a physical disability may be working at a level from an early stage.

- Age 1 year:** Crawls on hands and knees; shuffles on buttocks; 'cruises' lifting one foot and stepping sideways, holding on to furniture; sits on the floor; walks with one hand held.
- Age 2 years:** Walks up and down stairs with two feet on each step; runs safely stopping and starting; sits on small tricycle, cannot use pedals; kneels upright on a flat surface without support.
- Age 3 years:** Climbs nursery apparatus; walks forwards, backwards, sideways; rides tricycle using pedals, steers round corners; stands and walks on tiptoe.
- Age 4 years:** Stands or runs on tiptoe; hops on one foot; walks up and down stairs, one foot to a step; sits with legs crossed; increasing skill in catching, throwing, bouncing, kicking.
- Age 5 years:** Walks on a narrow line; stands on one foot, arms folded; hops on each foot; skips on alternate feet; can bend and touch toes; moves rhythmically to music; plays ball games.  
*(Sheridan, Sharma and Cockerill, 2008)*

A child with a physical disability may have delayed gross motor skills and can experience difficulties with mobility. The child may require an aid to support mobility, e.g. crutches, sticks, walking frame or wheelchair. It would be advisable to liaise with the child's physiotherapist for specific advice about the child's abilities. A posture management programme could be included into the daily activities, e.g. negotiating a pathway around the furniture, sitting on a chair, collecting a toy.



## Tip Tips:

It is useful to incorporate actions into everyday activities, e.g. bending to retrieve things, painting at an easel, stretching arms, hands, legs and feet.

Adults could try to improve coordination by using musical instruments, e.g. moving body parts in time to the beat.

Start with familiar gentle activities then, when the child is confident, move on to more challenging activities. Initially the child may benefit from one-to-one adult support, then progress to a small group setting.

Use the Gross Motor Skills Checklist to identify abilities and challenges.