

Gross motor skill information for children with Down Syndrome

Activities to develop sitting

Ideas and advice for parents and carers

General information

- Sitting requires more balance, better control and increased strength of the tummy, hip and back muscles than lying.
- Sitting gives your child a different view of the world and means they can use their hands more to explore toys.
- Once your child can sit briefly on the floor, practising sitting on a bench helps to develop trunk muscles, balance and putting weight through their feet, which is important for standing.
- Some children will bottom shuffle, using their feet to pull themselves forwards in sitting. You do not need to stop them doing this, but still encourage practicing moving into a crawling position.

Sequence

- Pull to sit
- Sitting with support
- Sitting independently
- Sitting on a low chair / bench
- Moving in and out of sitting

Pull to sit

Position

- Lying on back (pillow initially - see picture)
- Support child's shoulders and head with your hands (as little support as needed)
- Slowly bring child into sitting
- As child improves, move your hands to holding their upper arms, then holding their hands, then just one hand. See later activities for moving in and out of sitting

Encourage

- Head in middle
- Active tucking chin in and bracing shoulders

Play ideas

- Singing
- Funny faces
- Silly hat / head band



Sitting with support

Position

- Sit child on a firm surface and hold around their middle trunk, facing away from you or towards you
- As child gains more control, reduce your support to be lower down the trunk then at the hips

Encourage

- Help child to prop with their hands on their thighs rather than the floor
- Bringing toys to mouth or to midline to bash
- Reaching for dangling toys

Play ideas

- Toys within reach in front of them



- Mirror
- Play gym (in sitting)
- Reaching for your face

Sitting independently

Position

- Start on firm surface, e.g. floor
- Place cushions around child
- May prop on one hand first then lift both hands - may prop hands on floor or legs (see picture)
- Initially back may be rounded
- Legs slightly bent at knees and not too far apart

Encourage

- Reaching for toys within reach e.g. in front of them, then to either side
- Sitting with straight back

Play ideas

- Songs "Row, row boat", "Wind a bobbin"
- Naming / pointing to body parts
- Mirror



- Piano
- Rolling ball
- Try sitting child on a gym ball, gently bouncing and rolling them in all directions, encouraging them to stay upright

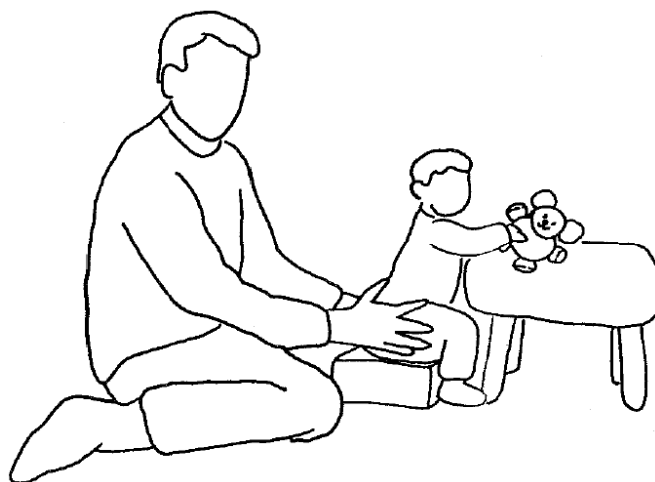
Sitting on a low chair / bench (box sitting)

Position

- Sit on a little chair or bench with hips and knees at 90° angles, thighs are fully supported on bench and feet are flat on the floor (see picture)
- Legs together
- Supervise closely as they may fall forwards or back
- Sofa or low table in front to play on

Encourage

- Sitting upright with straight back
- Turning to look over shoulder
- Reaching in all directions
- Sitting on chair with sides helps child prepare to push up to stand



Play ideas

- Bubbles
- Batting balloon
- Looking at books
- Singing

Side-sitting

Side-sitting is important for developing control of turning the body. This is needed for crawling and walking.

Position

- Gently turn one leg so both knees pointing to the same side (see picture)
- Propping on the hand on that side, help child reach in front and across
- Progress to both hands being down on the same side

Encourage

- Child starting to control own body and needing less support
- Reaching further for toys and up in the air
- Do little and often, frequently a difficult position



Play ideas

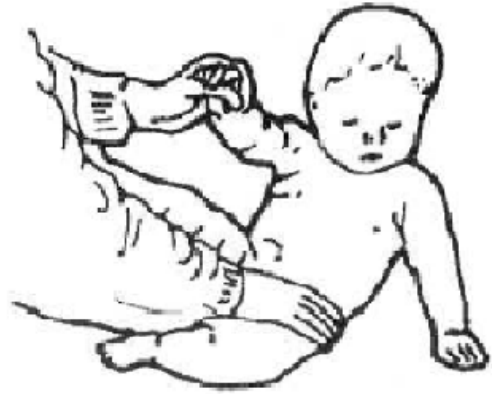
- Toys within reach in front and across body
- Rolling ball, toy car

Moving in and out of sitting

Moving into sitting from lying

(Instructions as for picture, repeat on opposite side)

- Start with child lying on their back
- Hold their **RIGHT** hand, encouraging child to hold on to you as well as you to them
- Gently guide them up and over to **LEFT** to push up on **LEFT** hand. You can place one hand on their **LEFT** hip so that they don't roll over
- Allow time for child to join in with the movement and to push on their other hand - give support slowly and as little as possible
- Encourage lifting their head and tucking chin in while pushing up on one hand



Moving out of sitting

- **Into lying** - sitting behind child, help them to go into side sitting then bend their elbow and lower to the floor
- **Into crawling** - help them go into side sitting then across into a crawling position (see crawling leaflet)
- Avoid letting child lower themselves forward between their legs and "doing the splits" to get on to their tummy, as this position stresses the hip joints

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If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email lch.pet@nhs.net

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

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