

Gross motor skill information for children with Down Syndrome

Activities to develop pull to stand

Ideas and advice for parents and carers

General information

- Pulling into a standing position will help your child to reach new things and have a different view of the world.
- This position helps provide a stepping stone for learning to walk.
- Most children learn to pull first to their knees and then to push up into standing.
- It is important to know that physiotherapists **DO NOT** recommend babywalkers or bouncers for any children, particularly those with developmental difficulties or altered muscle tone.
- Babywalkers have been proven not to enhance development and may actually impair it.
- Please see separate babywalkers leaflet for further information.



Sequence

- Pulling to low kneeling at the sofa
- Lowering down from kneeling to floor sitting
- High kneeling
- Pulling into half kneeling at sofa
- Pulling to stand
- Sit to stand
- Standing
- Lowering down from standing

Note:

- If your child is struggling to pull up on a sofa, try using other surfaces for them to pull up on.
- E.g. a toy box, coffee table that may be firmer than your sofa, or have a lip at the edge to make holding on easier.
- Placing objects that your child really wants e.g. treats or toys, up higher will help motivate standing.

Kneeling at furniture

Position

- Start with child sitting on their bottom, side on to the support
- Help / encourage them to move across in to side sitting
- Sofa roughly at chest height for child kneeling (see picture) with toys on top
- Place child's hands on to sofa then support at their hips and guide them across on to their knees



Encourage

- Reaching in all directions
- Kneeling back on feet (low kneel) then later, kneeling up and reaching (high kneel)
- Holding the position on their own

Play ideas

- Cause and effect / light and sound toys
- Mirror
- Books
- Toys / treats on sofa or table (stable surface)

Kneeling to sitting

- Guide your child back to sitting on their feet, then guide their bottom down to the side into side-sitting
- Help your child turn their legs to move from side sitting to normal sitting
- Practise to both sides until your child decides which side they prefer

High kneeling



Position

- Not leaning on surface with tummy, but holding on with hands
- Gradually reduce support you give for child to get in to and hold position

Encourage

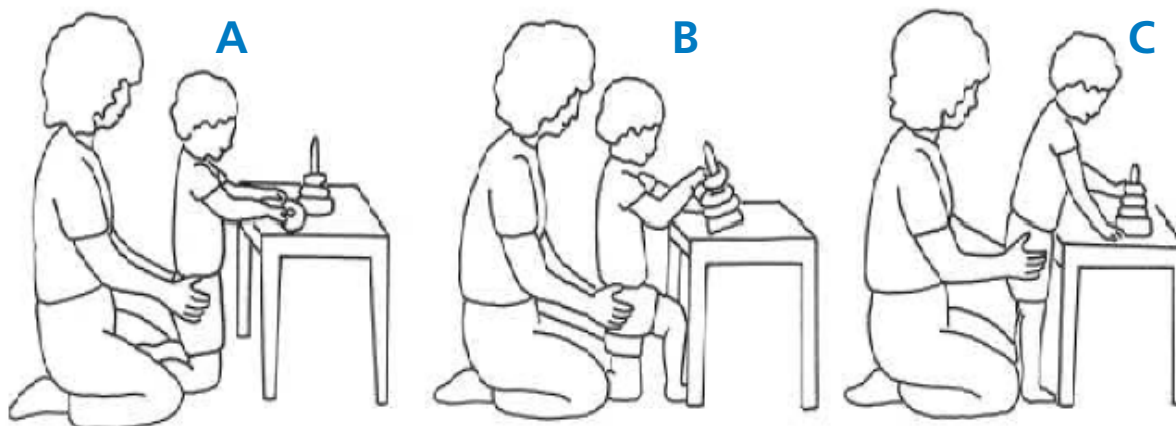
- Turning and reaching to sides for toys
- Moving between low kneeling and high kneeling
- Reaching up to higher surfaces

Play ideas

- Reaching for toys
- Push along toys i.e. cars, balls
- Click clack track / ball run
- Posting / shape sorting toys

Pulling from half kneeling to stand

- Many children start pulling to stand by 'hauling' themselves up through their arms.
- Moving through half kneeling is a more advanced skill and requires your child to shift their weight to one side whilst moving the other leg forwards to push through.



Position

- Support child at hips while they are kneeling at the table / sofa (A)
- Guide their weight over their LEFT leg while helping them bring their RIGHT leg forward (so foot flat on floor as B)
- Push down gently over their RIGHT leg whilst starting to lift them from their LEFT hip to encourage your child to come into standing (C)

Encourage

- Your child to join in the movement and push up
- Practise coming up and lowering through both sides until your child finds which way is easier

Play ideas

- Place favourite toys on surface

Sit to stand



Position

- Standing from box sitting is easier than going from the floor (see picture A) e.g. from your knee, low box or child sized chair
- Table in front, toy just out of reach
- Gently guide your child's hips forwards and up so that their chest comes forward over their feet ("nose over toes")

Encourage

- Your child to push up themselves
- The forward movement of their upper body over the feet
- Child's hips, knees and feet should be in line (see picture B) in standing
- Supporting with hands on table rather than leaning on tummy

Play ideas

- Posting games
- In/out of box games
- Nursery rhymes e.g. "Grand Old Duke of York"
- Piano

Standing

Position

- Place toys that motivate your child on furniture around the room
- Initially your child will lean on their tummy and have their feet wide apart

Encourage

- Feet shoulder width apart
- Hands to support rather than leaning on tummy (see picture)
- Reaching to sides for toys - only just out of reach!
- As balance improves, encourage holding on with one hand and reaching to the sides, behind them and turning to look over their shoulders
- To lower back from standing, help child bend one knee, lower back to half kneel then down to kneeling and on to floor



- Children often just “bump” down backwards and land on their bottom initially

Play ideas

- Favourite toys at standing height
- Playing hide and seek - toys placed under cushions
- Cause and effect / push button toys
- Bubbles

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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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Children's Physiotherapy Team
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