



POSTURAL CONTROL

Postural Control is the ability to maintain the body in a controlled position. Postural control requires muscle strength in the muscles around the neck, back, tummy and hips. Good postural control is important for children as it impacts on their ability to function in the classroom.

Children are expected to sit for long periods of time at a desk or on the mat. Children with low postural control may find this very difficult. Children who have difficulties with controlling posture may slump at their desk, rest their head in their hand (preventing them stabilising their writing page or engaging in a two handed task), wriggle and changing position. They may look tired and inattentive.

All of the above also may result in a decreased arousal level or attention to task. The child may fatigue quicker than other children because they are spending their energy and thoughts trying to sit 'still' rather than complete the task at hand.

Helpful Activities to Develop Postural Control:

- ◆ Weight bearing postures or activities e.g. wheelbarrow walking (supporting the child at their knees), chair push ups, tug of war, wall 'push overs.'
- ◆ Animal walks (bear and crab walks, bunny hops, kangaroo jumps, duck waddles, frog jumps)
- ◆ **Aeroplanes** - Ask the child to lay on their tummy, lifting arms, head and legs off the ground. Can they hold it the aeroplane for 20 seconds?
- ◆ **Tummy Curls** - Lying on their back, the child crosses their arms over their chest, curl their legs up and lift their head off the ground.
- ◆ Outside play - climbing, swinging, digging in the sandpit, throwing, catching, kicking or bating balls
- ◆ Rolling games e.g. tin soldier rolling, sausage roll making (roll the child up in a rug or mat with head outside of the end of the mat for safety!)
- ◆ Bury objects deep in the sand, mud, playdough or a bucket of rice.





POSTURAL CONTROL cont...

- ◆ Use a variety of objects to catch and throw (e.g. bean bags, soft toys, balls, water balloons etc... to throw at a variety of targets e.g. skittles, hoops, toys, targets on a wall)
- ◆ Hit a large therapy ball back and forth with two hands or against a wall
- ◆ Commando crawling through the house
- ◆ Gross motor activities such as tug of war, hopscotch, jump rope, wheelbarrow walks
- ◆ At the playground climb up a rope, use the monkey bars, fly the flying fox, swing, or build a sandcastle in the sandpit



Helpful Strategies to Develop Postural Control:

- ◆ Encourage the child to lay on their tummy, side sit or rest on all fours (like crawling) when listening to a story, doing a puzzle, playing a game, watching t.v., reading a book or playing with Lego for periods of time. Remind the child not to hold their head in their hands but rather rest on their elbows for support when assuming any of the above positions.
- ◆ When a child is sitting in a chair, make sure the child's feet are flat on the floor. It is very difficult to sit with good postural control if our feet are not on the floor. If the table and chairs are too big, bind old telephone books together with masking tape to make a block.
- ◆ In the classroom:
 - Be sure that the child is sitting in their chair with their feet on the floor, their bottom in the back of the chair and their body positioned so it is one fist distance from the desk.
 - Use alternatives to complete desk tasks e.g. allow the child to stand to do their work or let them sit on a therapy ball