

Pediatric Development Center



~ Newsletter ~



2010

We provide occupational therapy evaluation, treatment and consultation for children with developmental delays, autism/Asperger, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, sensory processing disorders, attention, behavioral concerns, handwriting, and other areas of weakness. Contact us for further information:

125 Presumpscot St. Portland, ME.
(207) 699-5531

Good Resources:

www.integrationscatalog.com

www.kaboose.com

Inclement Weather

Throughout the winter we will experience snow and ice. Our office is usually open unless the weather is extremely bad. It is unpredictable how the day will go, whether the roads will clear early or a storm will come in later. Your therapist or the office will contact you to determine the best route of action. It is very important that we have your current phone number, including a cell phone or other daytime phone number. In case of very severe weather we will list a clinic closing on WCSH 6. Also, please remember to call if your child is sick and will not be coming to the clinic.

Abilitations Education: Integrating Posture

A strong postural system makes a huge impact on individuals' perceptions of themselves, their surroundings and their functional abilities. A strong trunk enables a child, for instance, to breathe more effectively and use the extremities more effectively. An intact sensory system is paramount for creating postural integrity. Our sensory system does not work in isolation from our postural/muscular system. They are all like parts of an orchestra that must work together to "perform". For those with sensory processing disorders, this is a challenge.

The challenge often shows itself with a child that might look slumped over or overly active (who cannot sit still).



Trouble with Sitting?

Have a child who won't sit still? Wonder why that child has to wiggle, slump, or tip the chair back? Many children with low muscle tone (the amount of resistance in the muscle) and/or sensory processing disorders tend to move around frequently and sit poorly by placing their heads on the table or wrapping their feet around a chair leg. These extra movements and positions help give input to the sensory system which in turn helps organize and calm the body and provide better body awareness. Providing opportunities for controlled movement such as sitting on a ball chair or seat cushion may actually help a child stay seated and attend to tasks longer. Proper positioning in a well-fitted chair is also important to promote good trunk alignment and better posture. A well-fitting chair should allow hips, knees and ankles to be in 90 degrees of

flexion (bending) while proper desk height should be about 1 inch above the elbows when flexed (bent) at 90 degrees with arms at sides at the waist level. Feet should always be on the floor or on a stable surface such as a foot box. Take a moment to assess the child. Does he need assistance with better trunk alignment? A seat cushion or ball chair to allow movement? A well-seated child = a happier, more productive student!

Got Postural Problems? Can't Sit Still?

Supported seating:

Teaching a child to sit can have as much impact on their physical health, self esteem and processing as it does teaching them to talk or walk. The way a child learns to sit can have long-term effects all the way into adulthood. There is clear evidence that chronic back pain can be a result of poor sitting habits stemming all the way back to childhood. The most effective sitting posture for long term spinal health is a 90 degree hip angle, 90 degree knee angle and 90 degree ankle angle so that the individual's back maintains the 3 major spinal curves at the neck, upper and lower backs. At the same time the pelvis should be in a neutral position (not tilted forward or back). A slouched posture can be damaging to say the least. For children

with low tone, a supported seating device may be necessary.

Active sitters:

For many children sitting still is actually painful. A more active sitting approach is necessary. A cushion, ball chair, t-stool or rocker may be helpful. This can assist with concentration, improved circulation, longer attention spans and an overall better feeling. Sometimes increasing the angle between the trunk and the thigh of the child (seating them on a wedge) can put them into a more alert posture for active participation. This is a great short-term position for active sitters. Leaning back in a chair should not be used as it can be hazardous plus it puts the head into a forward position which can alter posture over time.



Don't forget to get some movement in on those freezing winter days! Some fun games to play inside where it is warm:

Shoe Box Relay Race

Supplies: Tootsie Rolls (1 for each child) Shoe box for each

team Bell for each team 2 mittens for each team 2 bowls for each team

Place tootsie rolls, in a bowl, at the opposite end of the room. Hang a bell, from the ceiling, over the tootsie roll bowl.

How to Play: Divide the children into two or more relay teams. Explain that when you say, "GO" the first person on each team will put on the mittens, step into the shoe boxes and race to the other end of the room where they will ring the bell with their nose. They are then to pick up a tootsie roll out of the bowl and race back to their team still wearing their mittens and shoe boxes. Pass the mittens and shoe box to the next person in line, sit down, eat your tootsie roll. The first team to finish eating their tootsie rolls wins!

Snowball Relay Race

Supplies: Styrofoam ball for each team Pencil for each team

How to Play: Divide into teams. First child on each team will be given a Styrofoam ball (snowball) and a pencil. On your mark they are to bend over, place the ball on the floor, and push the ball with the pencil across the room, around an obstacle, and back to next child on team. First team to finish wins.