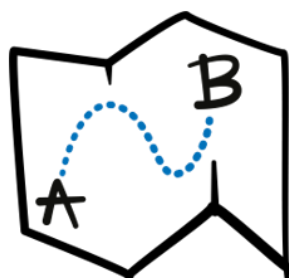


Sport and exercise when your child has additional needs: information for families

It does everyone good to be as active as possible – moving about keeps our body healthy, especially our heart, lungs and bones, as well as our mind. If your child has additional needs, it can be hard to think about what sport and exercise they can do but there are lots of options for accessible sport, exercise and activity. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) contains some suggestions for increasing your child's activity levels as well as organisations that can help. An Easy Read information sheet is included for your child.

Keeping active doesn't mean you have to be a Paralympian – building movement into everyday activities is good for everyone. Activity helps our heart, lungs and bones stay strong but also helps our mental wellbeing as well. It can help with our sleeping and make us feel happier. Solo activities are helpful but team activities with other people can help build a common purpose and encourage working together and socialising.



It doesn't have to be all in one go

Although children and young people are advised to be active for 60 minutes each day, they can split this into shorter chunks throughout the day if that's more manageable. Some mobile phone apps show active minutes or you could just make a note of how long your child spends being active each day.



too – they will know which local activities their other patients have enjoyed.

Build activity into everyday life

As well as taking part in organised activities, see how you can build keeping active into everyday life too.

Could you get to school without a car one or two days a week for instance? Splashing about at bath time can be fun as well as exercising muscles. Put on some music and move about – it doesn't matter if you look silly, your child will probably prefer it if you do.

Look online for suggestions for exercises at home

There are plenty of websites that have exercise routines for all abilities and ages that you can easily do at home with no or very little special equipment. Have a look at the list at the end of this information sheet for suggestions.

Rather than using weights to lift, why not fill a plastic bottle with water instead? You could also use a tin of beans if you can hold it with your hands.

Eat a healthy diet

If your child is becoming more active, you might notice they are getting hungrier too. It's important to keep following a healthy balanced diet – look at the Eat Well plate for suggestions of what proportion of each food group you should eat at each main meal.

It doesn't have to be competitive

Competition can be good for challenging yourself against someone else, but it can also be disheartening. Try to encourage self-improvement – that is, setting goals to reach – rather than competition with brothers, sisters or others. If you do want to build in a competitive element, you may have to adapt targets to give everyone a fair chance regardless of their age or ability.

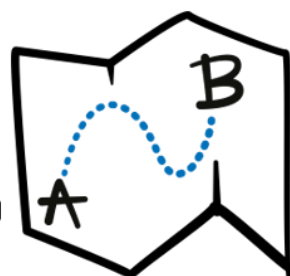
Do things as a family

There are plenty of options for family activities that are suitable for all ages and abilities. See if there is something that all your children will enjoy – if they are all in the same place at the same time, this will make organising easier.

For example, lots of swimming pools do mixed ability sessions with plenty of aids and floats so everyone can join and play whatever their ability.

See what activities are available locally

There are lots of websites you can search to find activities close to home but your local public library can be helpful too. They usually keep directories of local activities and clubs so can point you towards some. Talk to your local team



The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



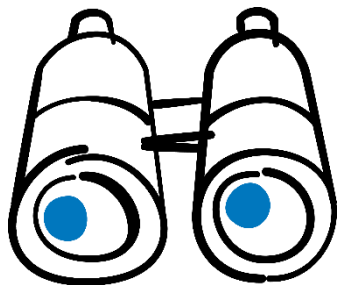
Try not to use food as a 'treat' or 'reward' for exercising – in the long run, this could defeat the object if what's eaten is greater than the energy burnt being active.

Don't stop your child doing things for fear they'll hurt themselves

Of course you are bound to worry when your child does things you might think are dangerous or risky. However, so long as you follow your doctors' advice, use any safety equipment for the activity and follow the rules, there are ways to include everyone in being active.

Talent spotting

Once you find an activity that your child enjoys, you might find they're really good at it as well. This is fine but the real aim is to



Further information and support

Talk to your doctor, nurse, physio or occupational therapist for ideas to get your child moving. They can advise you about any safety concerns or specialised aids your child may need.

Change 4 Life has lots of ideas for activities, many of which are adaptable for all abilities and ages, on their website at www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities/accessible-activities.

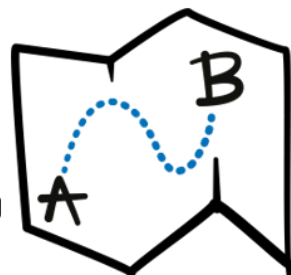
Mencap Sport have various pages about sport, exercise and activity for people with learning disabilities – visit their website at www.mencap.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/mencap-sport for further details.

increase their activity – any skill they show is a bonus.

If your child is talented in a particular sport, why not contact the national organisation to see what opportunities there might be for coaching or greater involvement.

Final words

- Keeping active doesn't always mean playing sports or going to the gym.
- Any activity that gets you moving, raises your heart beat, makes you a bit sweaty or out of puff is a good thing.
- We should all aim for 60 minutes each day being active, but you can split this into shorter chunks if this is more manageable.
- Find an activity that your child enjoys – it's always harder to make yourself do something that you don't enjoy.
- Use activity as 'family time' that you can spend together. Schedule in your diary and stick to it!
- It doesn't matter what you look like or whether you are any good – being active and having fun are the most important things.



You may have seen the adverts on television by **We Are Undefeatable**, encouraging anyone with a long term health condition to get active. There are lots more ideas on their website at weareundefeatable.co.uk/ways-to-move as well as information on activity for mental as well as physical health.

Disability Sport UK has produced a booklet called Doing Sport Differently, which contains lots of helpful information about sport when you have additional needs – download a copy at www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/pdf/DoingSportDifferentlyJune2017.pdf

Access Sport is working to increase the number of people with additional needs taking part in sport – see their website at www.accesssport.org.uk for details. There are plenty of online video exercise programmes as well as low or no cost ideas for activities.

Get Yourself Active is a programme run by Disability Rights UK and Sport England to encourage activity if you have additional needs. More details are at www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/get-yourself-active.

Activity Alliance is a charity that aims to increase activity levels for everyone with additional needs. Have a look at their website at www.activityalliance.org.uk/

British Blind Sport is an organisation that encourages anyone with a visual impairment to get active and take part in sports. See their website at britishblindsport.org.uk/ for further details.

Cerebral Palsy Sport is another organisation that encourages activity, exercise and sport for people with cerebral palsy and similar conditions. Visit their website at <http://www.cpsport.org/> for more information.

Parasport UK has a directory of organisations on their website at parasport.org.uk/

The **BBC** has a quick quiz that you can use to find the most suitable sport for you – have a go at www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28062001

Keeping active



Keeping active is good for your body.



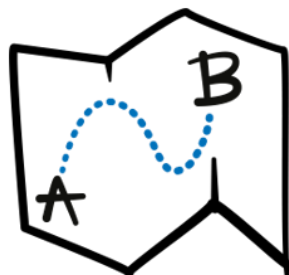
It can make us feel happy too.



You can adapt lots of activities so you can do them – give it a try.



Try lots of different things until you find something you enjoy.





Try to be active for 60 minutes each day, but you can do it in short chunks.



Set challenges for yourself rather than against other people.



Think about fun activities you can do with your family.



Eat a healthy balanced diet with not too much fat or sugar.



Use equipment to protect yourself if you need to – it is important to keep safe.



The most important things are to get moving and have fun!

