



Physiotherapy Guide for Parents of Children with Down Syndrome

Pre School-Years

Physiotherapists look at movement, strength and functional ability and can help children with Down Syndrome to:

- achieve skills such as sitting, crawling, standing
- improve independence in functional activities
- improve muscle strength, posture and balance

Almost all children with Down Syndrome experience a delay in development of their physical skills e.g. We expect your child to develop the ability to roll, sit, stand and walk independently but usually at an older age than their peers.

Most children with Down Syndrome have hypotonia (low tone or floppy muscles). Ligaments and tendons in those with Down Syndrome are more flexible than most other children and this is called joint Hypermobility. It is felt that a combination of low muscle tone and additional joint mobility are the reason why children with Down Syndrome have delayed motor skills). Keeping your child physically active with lots of different play opportunities in a variety of positions will help to develop your child's muscle strength and their motor skills.

Most children with Down Syndrome are monitored by a Physiotherapist until they are walking independently. It is important to encourage your child to participate in sports and leisure activities to help them keep strong and active. The Down Syndrome Association website has lots of information that is easy to access and read⁽¹⁾.

Often it is not dangerous for children to do simple forward rolls, horse riding and supervised bouncing on a trampoline. At more advanced stages all these activities carry a greater risk for everyone with or without Down Syndrome. If you have any questions, always ask a medical professional.

Developmental Milestones Chart **(adapted from DSMIG 2011)**

Every child with Down Syndrome has their own, individual profile of skills. This development chart, taken from the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group⁽²⁾ gives you a guide to the expected developmental milestones for children with Down Syndrome. Every child develops at different rates, but if you feel your child is not reaching their developmental milestones, you should contact your therapist for further support and advice.

Finding out about Moving:

Activity	Children with Down Syndrome		Typical Children	
	Average	Age range	Average	Age range
Holds head steady when sitting	5 months	3-5 month	3 months	1-4 month
Rolls Over	8 months	4-12 months	5 months	2-10 months
Sits Alone	9 months	6-16 months	7 months	5-9 months
Stands Alone	18 months	12-38 months	11 months	9-16 months
Walks Alone	23 months	13-48 months	12 months	9-17 months

We are lucky to have a very active group promoting successful inclusion in the local area⁽³⁾. Previously known Footprints they are now the Portsmouth Down Syndrome Association.

REF:

1. [Easy read information - Downs Syndrome Association \(downs-syndrome.org.uk\)](https://downs-syndrome.org.uk)
2. [A5-Downs-charts.pdf \(healthforallchildren.com\)](https://healthforallchildren.com/A5-Downs-charts.pdf)
3. [Activities - Portsmouth Down Syndrome Association \(portsmouthdsa.org\)](https://portsmouthdsa.org)