

How to Fit PT into Your Day When You Don't Have Time

Even when you're at home all day, it's hard to find time to do physiotherapy. Fortunately, PT can be fit into your routine throughout your day. Kids like routines, as they help kids to know what to expect next, so do these consistently, and they will become just part of your day.

- Starting in the morning to **assist your child to transition into sitting** before you lift them out of their bed or lift them up from changing their diaper. You can hold them at their trunk and roll them onto either side. Then lift them up to about 45 degrees and wait for your child to assist you to bring them the rest of the way up to sitting. As it gets easier for your child, move your support further down their trunk. If done after each diaper change, this exercise will add up over the day. Be sure to practice sitting up to both sides.
- On your way to the table for meals, assist your child to take a few steps to their chair. Gradually increase the distance you ask them to step to get to their chair or decrease the amount of help you give them. Or have your child work on taking big steps, stepping over obstacles such as toys or trying to jump or hop, starting with help and gradually progressing to on their own.
- Have some play time. At the end of play time, have your child assist with clean up by putting their toys into a basket or bucket. In sitting, they will have to shift their weight and reach for toys while maintaining their balance. If on their tummy or on hands and knees, they will be working on weight shifting to the side to free an arm to reach for the toy. And if in standing holding onto a support or hands free, they will work on muscle strengthening and grading as they bend down to pick up toys and stand back up to put them in the basket up on the couch or coffee table
- Sneak in a hip flexor stretch by positioning your child lying on their stomach propped on their forearms while they play with a toy, listen to a story or watch a video. This stretch is important as we spend much of our day in sitting with our hips bent and our backs rounded forward. It's a good one for you too!

- When sitting with your child during the day, sneak in some core strengthening. Have them sit on your lap either facing towards or away from you. Support your child at their trunk. Start with support under their arms for children who are working on head control and bring your support lower as they progress. For children who are walking on their own, support them at low trunk or even hips. Bounce them on your knees pretending to ride a horse and then tilt them to the side like they are falling off the horse. Wait for them to assist you or independently return to sitting up. Do it again to the other side. Initially your child will only be able to do this 2-3 times before becoming tired but gradually their endurance will increase.
- Finally, at bedtime, sneak in some gentle stretches. As your child slows down for the evening, assist them or ask them to **reach** up over head with their arms to put on their PJs and to stretch out their shoulders. Then have them bring their arms back down to the sides. This can be done in sitting or lying on their back. Once they are lying down you can pretend to “check how long their legs have grown that day” by bending the hip and knee on one side to 90 degrees. Then gently lift their heel to straighten their knee until you feel a gentle resistance of the hamstring muscle. Try to hold this for 10 seconds before switching to do the other side. For a calf stretch, hold the bottom of their mid-foot and above their ankle, bend their foot towards the shin bone with their knee straight until you feel a gentle stretch. Try to hold for 10 seconds, then repeat on the other side. If your child gets upset or tries to wiggle out of the stretch, bring their heel back down a bit to decrease the stretch. Stretches are most effective when there is a gentle stretch over a longer time instead of a short aggressive stretch.

Start by adding one or 2 physiotherapy exercises to your routine that best fit your goals for your child. After a few weeks when these feel like a solid part of your routine possibly add another physiotherapy activity. Before long, you will have a physiotherapy workout most days. And those days when it all doesn't go according to routine, don't worry. We all need breaks and can always try again another day. Should you have any specific questions regarding your child or would like further explanation about an exercise written, do not hesitate to contact our therapist!

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