

PHYSIOTHERAPY IN NOONAN SYNDROME

Many children and adults with Noonan syndrome benefit from physiotherapy. If you have any concerns with regard to mobility or motor development you should seek advice from a healthcare professional (such as GP, health visitor or school nurse), who can refer you or your child to a physiotherapist for assessment.

In young children the age at which developmental milestones are achieved may be delayed, this is often due to poor muscle tone or hypotonia. A physiotherapist can help the development of muscles with the use of stretching exercises and correct positioning in order to encourage the child to use their muscles in an appropriate way. Other recognised problems in Noonan syndrome such as with feeding can also be aided by discussing positioning with your physiotherapist.

Lax joints also frequently occur in Noonan syndrome. This means that joints as well as muscles, ligaments and tendons are flexible and fragile. This is known as hypermobility (hyper meaning 'more' and mobility meaning 'movement'), you may also have heard the phrase 'double jointed' used. These lax joints may cause pain and be more susceptible to injury; they therefore need special care.

General exercise is important as regular exercise means healthier joints. Swimming is excellent as the water protects your joints as you exercise. Running in water is also excellent exercise. Cycling (either on an exercise bike or normal bicycle), walking and non-contact sports (badminton, tennis etc) help build up muscle strength and control and can help reduce pain and stiffness. You should be careful with sports that involve sudden stopping and twisting, for example football, basketball, rugby and squash, as these can increase the risk of injury.

We recommend if there are mobility problems or lax joints that you seek advice from a physiotherapist who can help you to build up an appropriate daily programme of management, along with treatments as necessary. Incorrect or inappropriate techniques can cause more harm than good. This will involve stretching exercises

and muscle relaxation. Techniques such as massage can also be advised.

Further information on suitable exercises may be gained from The Hypermobility Syndrome Association(www.hypermobility.org), Parents Online(www.parents.org.uk) or Kids Physio (www.kidsphysio.co.uk).

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