

## **The impact of physical movement to benefit mental and physical wellbeing**

The importance of physical movement is vital. The implications on those that do no activity outways those that have a healthy active lifestyle. It can reduce your risk of major illnesses, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer and lower your risk of early death by up to 30%. (<https://www.nhs.uk-live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits> > accessed 14/7/23)

The government recommendations for exercise differ for disabled young people, 20 minutes per day to 60 minutes per day for neurotypical young people, see appendix 1 for more information. There are many ways in which we can support this within the school environment. Some of these include;

- **Wake and Shake/Sensory Circuits**
- **Sensory movement breaks**
- **Movement in the curriculum – PE and other subjects**
- **Movement outside of the curriculum – Lunchtime, before and after school**

### **Wake and shake / Sensory Circuits**

This is participation in a short sensory motor circuit that is primarily completed in the morning, upon the arrival of students to school. This enables them to settle into the school day and is composed of 3 parts.

**Part 1**, The alerting section, the aim of this section is to provide vestibular and proprioceptive stimulation within a controlled setting.

**Part 2**, The organising section, this includes activities that require motor sensory processing, balance and timing. The child needs to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a sequential order.

**Part 3**, The calming section, which includes proprioceptive or deep pressure activities. These activities are very important as they provide input to ensure that children leave the circuit and return to their classrooms calm, centred and ready for the day ahead.

The sensory circuits help reduce fidgeting, organising self, constant rocking and lack of concentration.

(<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/docs/default-source/leaflets---sensory-strategy-leaflets---april-2015/0218---sensory-circuits---info-for-teachers---april-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=8#:~:text=The%20Sensory%20Circuit%20provides%20a,ready%20for%20learning%20to%20occur> > accessed 14/7/23)

### **Sensory movement breaks**

Allowing students to have a break from a set task can give them time to refocus on the task and achieve it to the best possible outcome. Alternatively getting them to achieve a task in chunks and having sensory breaks after each part can give them small times to refocus and acts as motivation to achieve the task. With kinesthetic learners, it is essential that they put feelings into the work they have been set so they understand it. See appendix 2 for some suggested ideas.

### **Movement in the curriculum – PE and other subjects**

Physical Movement within the timetabled lessons is essential. It can easily be implemented within PE, Forest School and Dance. Subjects such as Art, Maths, Performing Arts could also use physical movement within lessons. It will allow students to think in an active environment. Within Physical Education there are a number of skills that are taught as well as improving upon students teamwork, communication, problem solving and leadership qualities. It gives students a chance to improve upon their confidence and understanding of how they react to tasks, creating resilience and independence.

### **Movement outside of the curriculum – Before school, breaktime, lunchtime and after school**

Giving students the opportunity to take part in a range of activities outside of lessons allows them to improve mental and physical wellbeing. It creates a safe environment for them to work in competitive situations developing their independence and social skills.

In conclusion exercise increases lung capacity, helps manage weight and strengthens bone and muscle capacity.

According to the American National Institute of Health, there are 3 neurotransmitters that contribute to exercise affecting brain function. Studies have been carried out and one of the findings was that exercise benefitted the central nervous system along with other areas ([https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4061837/#:~:text=Dopamine%20\(DA\)%2C%20noradrenaline%20,\(can%20work%20against%20neurological%20disorders](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4061837/#:~:text=Dopamine%20(DA)%2C%20noradrenaline%20,(can%20work%20against%20neurological%20disorders) > accessed 15/7/23).

There are many studies which have shown that doing physical activity can improve mental health. For example, it can help with:

**better sleep** – by making you feel more tired at the end of the day

happier moods – physical activity releases feel-good hormones that make you feel better in yourself and give you more energy.

**managing stress, anxiety or intrusive and racing thoughts** – doing something physical releases cortisol which helps us manage stress. Being physically active also gives your brain something to focus on and can be a positive coping strategy for difficult times

**better self-esteem** – being more active can make you feel better about yourself as you improve and meet your goals

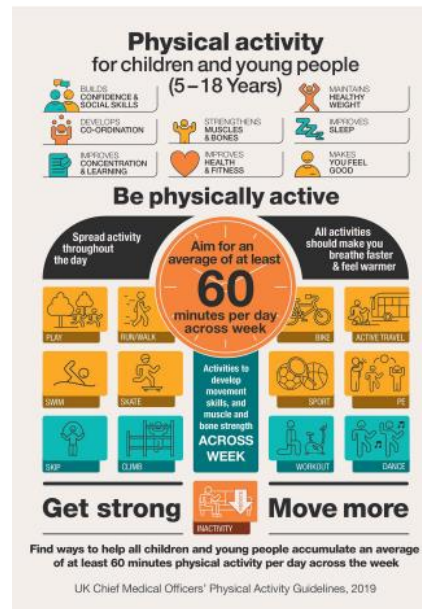
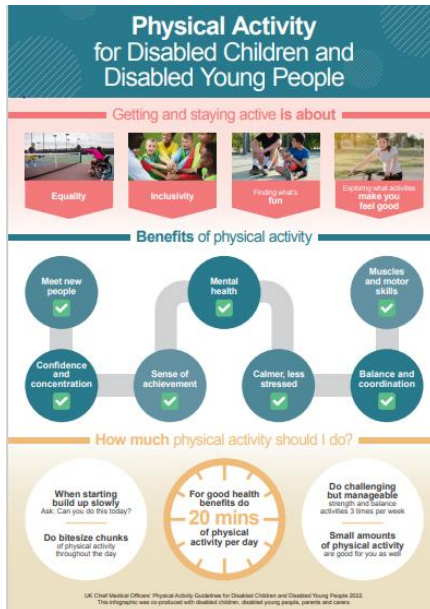
**reducing the risk of depression** – studies have shown that doing regular physical activity can reduce the likelihood of experiencing a period of depression

connecting with people – doing group or team activities can help you meet new and like-minded people, and make new friends.

(<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/physical-activity-and-your-mental-health/about-physical-activity/#:~:text=There%20are%20many%20studies%20which,and%20give%20you%20more%20energy> > accessed 14/7/23)

Students with special education needs such as ADHD and autism benefit greatly from physical movement as it provides them with routine, exertion and repetition which can all help in their development.

## Appendix 1



[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1055018/infographic-physical-activity-for-disabled-children-and-disabled-young-people.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1055018/infographic-physical-activity-for-disabled-children-and-disabled-young-people.pdf)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1054282/physical-activity-for-children-and-young-people-5-to-18-years.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1054282/physical-activity-for-children-and-young-people-5-to-18-years.pdf)

## Appendix 2

### Moving around the classroom and school:

- Walking / biking / scooter to school. If you live far away, park a little further from school to encourage walking and more exercise.
- For the whole class to carry out exercises after a period of sitting on the carpet or sitting in the chair listening to instructions.
- Themed workouts for the class to carry out.
- Hand out exercise books, equipment and collect from peers.
- Classroom helper.
- Open and hold doors for peers.
- School errands carrying books/boxes, taking register to office, handing out/collecting books.
- Action songs.
- Walking to get some water.



### Sitting in the class chair:

- Hands on the chair push hands to lift the bottom off the chair.
- Chair sit (Do 10)—have children sit down and stand up repeatedly from their chair.
- Place hands on the child's shoulders and press down, to provide them with deep pressure.
- Child to place hands on head and push down.
- Shrug shoulders up towards your ears hold 5 secs then relax.
- Roll neck and head slowly tuck chin into right shoulder then to left.

### Equipment to help:

- Weighted backpack, wear backpack on both shoulders with weights or heavy toys placed inside to provide them with deep pressure and calming effect.
- Move 'n' sit cushion
- Place weighted material across the lap when completing table top activities.
- Theraband under the desk, tied around the legs of the table to provide a foot fidget toy and input throughout the day, when feet are placed down on it or moved.



<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/occupational-therapy/ot-leaflets/movement-breaks> > accessed 14/08/23

### Appendix 3

### Bizzy breaks poster

## HUFFERS

- Only do the Huffers after doing the Looseners.
- Use lively background music.
- Do not stop between actions.
- Use on the spot walking as a transition or rest period if there are signs of over-exertion.
- Repeat each activity up to 8 times.
- Do not hold the breath - sigh, sing or huff.



1. Spot walk



2. Hup march



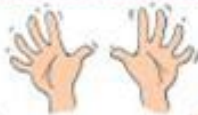
3. Punch bag



4. Side step

## STRETCHERS

- Do the stretchers when the body is warm all over i.e. after doing the Looseners and the Huffers.
- Use slow background music.
- Move into each stretch slowly.
- Stretch to the point of mild tension - then hold the stretch for 5-10 seconds.
- Repeat each stretch 3 times for both sides of the body.



1. Finger pull



2. Wrist wrencher



3. Wing wings



4. Bum stretcher

## ARMS

# BIZZY BREAKS!

<https://doorabarefieldcg.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/g70b-bizzy-breaks-poster-2010-1.pdf> > accessed 14/08/23