

Hypermobility in children – Under 5's

This leaflet is for children who have hypermobility in their joints. It covers exercises for strengthening your child's legs, arms and core muscles to help support their hypermobile joints.

This leaflet is intended to be used in conjunction with the APCP symptomatic hypermobility leaflet which can be accessed via the link below. Your paediatrician, GP or occupational therapist may have already given this leaflet to you. The leaflet gives information on what symptomatic hypermobility is and advice on what you can do to help your child.

<http://apcp.csp.org.uk/documents/parent-leaflet-symptomatic-hypermobility-2012>

General exercise

General exercise is very important to strengthen and maintain strength in muscles. If your child is experiencing pain, they may not wish to do any exercise, or exercise may bring on their pain. In order to exercise without giving them pain, non-weight bearing exercise is best, e.g. swimming, cycling. If your child is experiencing pain you may need to limit high impact exercise such as jumping off things and running on hard surfaces.

How often should my child do the exercises?

It is important to do the exercises daily, in order to strengthen their muscles. Find a time of day that suits your routine best. You may wish to use a tick sheet or reward chart in order to keep track and reward your child for doing their exercises every day. It is important to build up the number of repetitions that they can do as they get stronger. Start with 3-5 repetitions and build up to 10-20.

Squatting exercises

Ask or encourage your child to play in a squatting position. Get them to play with a toy in a prolonged squat position, or squatting down to pick up objects from the floor. Once they are managing this well, encourage your child to reach up for objects and sideways out of their base of support.



Single leg stand

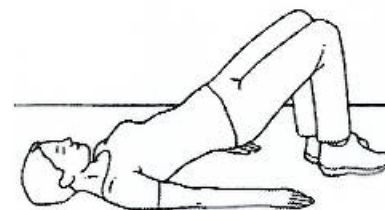
Ask your child to stand on one leg for as long as they can. Get them to count how long they can maintain their balance so that they can see how they are progressing. If they can't manage to balance, they can use a finger tip on a table to gain their balance. Do this on both legs. Once they are managing this well, they can try standing on a cushion on a carpeted floor or throwing and catching a ball at the same time. If your child is under the age of 4, they may struggle with this exercise.



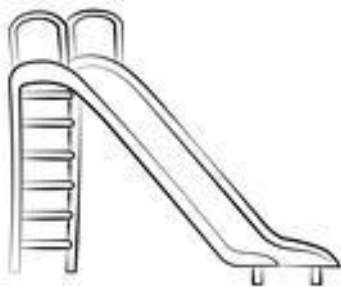
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Bridging

With your child lying on their back with their knees bent, and their feet and knees hip wide apart, encourage them to lift their bottom up. To make it into a game, get a toy to go under their bottom. Hold for a few seconds and then they need to slowly lower their bottom back to the ground.



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Climbing

Encourage your child to climb up ramps or walk up slides. If they are unable to climb on their feet, encourage your child to crawl.

Heel/toe walking

With your child in standing, ask them to take small steps making sure the heel of the front foot touches the toe of the back foot. You can get your child to imagine they are walking on a tightrope. If this is too difficult for your child, get your child to walk along balance beams.



Arm exercise – crawling

If your child struggles with pencil skills or activities using their hands, arms or shoulders, exercises can help to strengthen and make your child more aware of how they are using their arms in activities.

Lay your child on their tummy and put weight through their arms whilst playing or reading a book.

Alternatively encourage your child to crawl – maybe through tunnels or over soft play equipment.

Kneeling

Encourage your child to get into the half kneeling position, placing one foot forwards whilst kneeling. Get them to count how long they can maintain their balance so that they can see how they are progressing. Do this on both legs. Once they are managing this well, they can try playing with toys in this position or throwing and catching a ball at the same time if they are old enough.



Other strengthening ideas

Depending on the age of your child, these are a few further ideas to help strengthen your child's arms, leg and core muscles to support their hypermobile joints.

- Lying on their tummy, pushing up through their arms
- Bouncing your child on your lap
- Bunny hops
- Scoot toys
- Kicking/throwing and catching a ball

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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