**Autism and Physical Therapy**

**PT evaluations:** a health and developmental history and assessment of:

- Body and safety awareness
- Coordination
- Postural strength and control
- Functional mobility
- Play skills
- Interests and motivators
- Transition/Ability to change between different activities
- Strengths and challenges in developmental gross motor skills (i.e. hop, skip, jump, pedal a bike or trike)
- Participation in daily routines in the home, community, and school (level of and assistance needed)

**PT Interventions (child/family in outpatient/home and child/family/school staff):**

- Improve participation in daily routines at home and school (level of and assistance needed)
- Develop new gross motor skills
- Improve balance, coordination and posture
- Improve reciprocal play skills, such as kicking, throw/catch, roll ball
- Develop motor imitation skills
- Improve fitness, strength, and endurance

**Age: 0-3**

- Training of families and caregivers to increase a child's participation in routines of daily life that are challenging
- Promote development and practice of age appropriate gross motor skills in both free play and structured play
- Improve balance, strength and coordination
- Gait training (safety/efficiency)- curbs, negotiating stairs, surface changes (grass/mulch)
- Promote indoor and outdoor play skills
- Priority to develop imitation skills (eg, perform songs with gross motor actions)
- Caregiver education to promote positive behaviors: structure, routines, and physical boundaries to daily activities (define task)

**Age: 3-18**

- School setting: educate school staff and parents about the impact of ASD on school functioning
- Minimize a child's challenges
- Promote accessing and participating in the school environment and curriculum

- Recommendations to support education: materials/equipment, modifications and accommodations (seating- ball chairs to promote sitting/decrease getting out of seat, defining personal space with hula hoops, carpet squares on floor and specially placed workstations for seated work- dividers, minimal distraction, visual schedule)
- Promote movement breaks (for individual and entire class)
- Strategies to teach the child how to imitate the movement activities of other children, develop spatial/directional concepts, body/spatial awareness, balance/coordination
- Teach and practice the movement skills needed to participate in social games and peer interactions
- Functional mobility: stairs, manipulation with movement, travel (fire drills, crowded hallways, cafeterias), maintaining and changing positions, school bus steps, and recreational movement (playgrounds, physical education)
- Part of Interdisciplinary team: promotes self-regulation, listening, taking turns

**Age: 18+**

- Promote independence and participation in daily life skills/functional mobility tasks (job, function at home, leisure)
- Promote fitness: physical activity opportunities/ Establish physical activity routines to promote strength, balance, coordination and endurance

[https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit/treatments-therapies](https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit/treatments-therapies)
[http://www.moveforwardpt.com/symptomsconditionsdetail.aspx?cid=a6482e75-65c6-4c1f-be36-5f4a847b2042#.VnQS1M_SmW8](http://www.moveforwardpt.com/symptomsconditionsdetail.aspx?cid=a6482e75-65c6-4c1f-be36-5f4a847b2042#.VnQS1M_SmW8)
[http://physical-therapy.advanceweb.com/Features/Articles/More-than-Just-Playtime.aspx](http://physical-therapy.advanceweb.com/Features/Articles/More-than-Just-Playtime.aspx)