

health & *wellness*



P.G. Chambers School

Discovering the unique potential
within every child

health & wellness

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Health and wellness are important for everyone! Many people, young and not so young, lead sedentary lifestyles. More than one third of US children are overweight or obese, and this is twice as likely to be the case for children with disabilities. This is often related to a greater likelihood of being sedentary due to their disabilities.

Many parents feel that if their children are thin, they are fit, when in fact, a child's endurance is much more representative of overall health than weight alone.

Most children spend more than two hours per day using electronic devices, including a parent's phone, iPod, iPad, computer, and television.

Nearly 20% of all children and adolescents have a chronic condition or disability (National Center on Physical Activity and Disability),





PHYSICAL FITNESS

Physical fitness is defined as the state or condition that permits a child to carry out daily activities without undue fatigue and with sufficient energy reserve to enjoy active leisure.



and their levels of participation in recreation, school sports, and physical activity programs are much lower than their counterparts who do not have disabilities. It is therefore critical that ALL children with disabilities engage in healthy eating and adequate physical activity. Because children with disabilities may be at higher risk, it is vital for them to learn about healthy lifestyles in the context of their abilities, limitations, and challenges.

Unfortunately children and youth with disabilities may be overlooked when considering participation in regular fitness programs. Some parents may have concerns that their children should not exert themselves because of their disability-related difficulties with movement. However, fitness is for EVERY child, regardless of his or her functional level, and the benefits of physical activity for children with disabilities ARE EXACTLY THE SAME as for other children.

Benefits include improvement in:

- Physical fitness and endurance
- Skill development
- Socialization
- Social and emotional well-being
- Confidence
- Attention span
- Independence

Physical activity also:

- Facilitates the development of life skill competencies
- Increases inclusion in family and community life
- Improves socialization
- Increases school attendance by enhancing general health

Physical activity also reduces or slows the progress of the following:

- Secondary disease risk such as coronary artery disease, osteopenia, osteoporosis, scoliosis, contractures, joint subluxations, reflux, constipation, nutritional problems, hypertension, respiratory illness and complications, pneumonia, chronic lung disease, skin ulcerations, cardiovascular disease, stroke, heart attacks, and sleep disorders.
- Functional decline with age
- Excess body fat





EXERCISE: HOW MUCH DOES MY CHILD NEED?

Plan some type of movement activity at home each day, incorporating it into your child's daily schedule. One example of an activity to do at home is taking a walk outside or in the mall, using a gait trainer if necessary. Allow your child to move at varying speeds in the gait trainer as a challenge. You can use a pedometer (available as an app on your mobile phone) to track how far your child can walk before becoming fatigued.

Other options include tricycles/ adaptive tricycles, use of standers, swimming, ball playing (throwing, kicking, catching), floor soccer, hitting a suspended ball with arms or feet on the floor, treadmills, family hiking, visiting playgrounds, waving a parachute, movement to music, sports activities, relay races, obstacle courses, scooter boards, push-pull

weighted objects, running, and jumping. The most important take-away is **JUST GET MOVING!!**

How do I know if my child is doing the right kind and amount of physical activity?

Contact your child's physical therapist or pediatrician to find out what is the best type of activity for home.

If your child has a cardio-respiratory medical condition or has been given warnings about exertion from exercise, check with his or her cardiologist for how to proceed with an appropriate program. All children with seizure disorders or asthma should also get clearance from their physicians prior to starting ANY fitness program.

NUTRITION

Encourage Healthy Eating!

A child's nutrition is based on the same principles as those for an adult. Everyone needs the same types of nutrients including vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, protein, and fat. Children, however, need different amounts of specific nutrients at different ages.

What is the best formula to fuel your child's growth and development?

Review these nutrition basics and consult with a local registered dietitian or pediatrician to develop a plan for your child based on his or her gender, age, and disability.

Protein. Choose seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans, peas, and soy products.

Fruits. Encourage your child to eat a variety of fresh, canned, frozen, or dried fruits — rather than fruit juice. If your child drinks juice, make sure it is 100% juice with no added sugars and limit to one-half cup (4 ounces) per day. Select canned fruit that is light or packed in its own juice, meaning it is low in added sugar. Keep in mind that one-quarter cup of dried fruit equals one cup of fresh fruit. When consumed in excess, dried fruits can contribute extra calories.

Vegetables. Serve a variety of fresh, canned, frozen, or dried vegetables. Include those that are dark green, red, and orange; beans and peas; starchy vegetables and others; each week. Choose low sodium canned and frozen vegetables. The different colors of fruits and vegetables represent all the different health benefits, so eat the rainbow!

Grains. Choose whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, popcorn, quinoa, and brown or wild rice. Limit refined grains such as white bread, pasta, and white rice. These are lower in fiber, a nutrient that helps us to feel full and keeps our digestion regular. Whole grains are higher in fiber.

Dairy. Children over the age of two should be encouraged to eat and drink fat-free or low-fat dairy products, such as milk, yogurt,



cheese, or fortified soy beverages. There are many lactose-free and low lactose products available, so even if a child is sensitive to lactose, usually dairy products do not need to be completely avoided.

Sugar. Be cautious of added sugars and limit consumption. Naturally occurring sugars, such as those in fruit and milk, are not added sugars. Examples of added sugars include, but are not limited to, brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, and honey.

Saturated and trans fats. Limit saturated fats, which are fats that primarily come from animal food sources, such as red meat, poultry, and full-fat dairy products. Replace saturated fats with vegetable and



nut oils, which provide essential fatty acids and vitamin E. Healthier fats are also naturally present in olives, nuts, avocados, and seafood. Limit trans fats by avoiding foods that contain partially hydrogenated oil.

Encourage healthy eating and reduce the amount of unconscious eating by designating a special place in your home for snacking.

Follow a plan developed by a registered dietitian for best health benefits. At least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day—two fruits and three vegetables—is the recommended amount for the average child.

Be sure to drink water daily.

P.G. Chambers School is a 501 (c) (3) organization that provides education and therapy services for children with complex, multiple disabilities, or those at risk for disabilities and developmental delays, and child care for children with and without disabilities. The school's mission statement is **"Discovering the unique potential within every child."** At P.G. Chambers School, "discovering potential" inspires us to provide the best, most comprehensive early childhood education for children with and without disabilities, and special education and therapy programs for children with disabilities and developmental delays. Since 1954, P.G. Chambers School has been changing the lives of children by helping them to develop a love of learning, to strive for independence, and most importantly, to develop unshakeable self-confidence.

Each year, P.G. Chambers School (PGCS), located in Morris County, NJ, provides services for more than 800 children and their families in Morris County and nine other surrounding counties in northern New Jersey. The school's programs reach children of all ages including typically developing infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and infants at-risk for developmental disabilities; school-age children eligible for special education services; and children diagnosed with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, seizure disorders, autism, and communication disabilities. Services are provided both on-site at the school's state-of-the-art facility in Cedar Knolls, and off-site in schools, homes, and child care centers throughout the region. Important partnerships with local school districts and community organizations help support PGCS students in their own communities. The school is accredited as an Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities and an Approved Clinic and Agency by the State of New Jersey, Department of Education.

For a complete list of references, please visit our website at www.chambersschool.org/programs/whole-child-initiative/

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healthy children
learn better!



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