



Exercise Tips

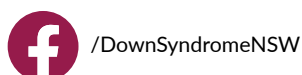



Mother of three school aged children *Teresa Haddock*, including the almost teenager Ben lives a busy, active life. Here are some tips on how to keep healthy and active.

- We try and aim to be active several times throughout the week for at least 15-20 minutes and ideally 30-45 minutes if time and other commitments allow.
- Make time for you to do exercise, whether you like pilates, walking, swimming or more intense workouts like running or going to a gym. If you feel healthy and enjoy the physical and mental benefits of exercise you are in a better place and can encourage others to join you or pick something they like doing. I joined a weekly pilates class which gives me a structure and I make sure I attend most sessions. Once you get to know the people in the class it's a good social connection and they ask where I am if I don't turn up.
- For your family member you can focus on their favourite sports or hobbies, building on what they do at school or their social activities. We love swimming and the beach and over the years Ben has enjoyed learn to swim classes with experienced teachers with a disability background or 'think outside the box' attitudes. Many swim centres employ experienced instructors or you can find some through associations such as Autism Swim to visit your home or meet at an ocean pool. Ben now competes at school events using a multiclass classification s14 through Swimming Australia. We will look into the new s18 classification for athletes with DS through Sport Inclusion Australia.
- Ben loves dance and has done jazz and hip hop classes in the past in PE at school and also at a dance school.

- Signing up for friendly competitions or events such as walkathons, swimming events – gaining ribbons and certificates at the end can really motivate my son and his siblings. Before Covid-19 we were fortunate to travel to Noosa, Queensland to enter the Superkids Triathlon that also had a special needs event. An adult was allowed to accompany participants. Ben loved getting a medal and photos at the end. He still wears the participant t-shirt despite it now having a hole in it!
- There are many online options too – in the lockdowns my teenage daughter showed us some fitness videos she liked on her phone and we tried to do them as a family or just her with her brothers. Siblings or other family members can be much cooler than Mum and Dad for some teens.
- Make it fun, we love music in our house and it is a great motivator. Your family member can turn on their favourite music and dance around or blow up some balloons and do balloon volleyball for 15-20 minutes. Ben and his grandmother do it and they laugh a lot. They work up quite a sweat too and she gets a work out at the same time.
- Some equipment can be bought at low cost from department stores like an exercise dice we bought at K-Mart. Each roll shows up a different exercise and with some music in the background it can be fun by yourself or with family or friends.
- We have used NDIS funding in the past to pay extra for a water safety person so Ben could attend a nipper surf skills camp with his siblings. Funding is not always approved for this but it can be asked for as a part of community inclusion.
- Many physiotherapists offer one on one or group exercise sessions. We found one at the centre where Ben does Occupational Therapy. Sometimes NDIS funding can be used for part of the cost, or seeking a Medicare partial rebate if you see a GP and a referral is approved or part of the costs can be claimed if a family member is covered by private health insurance. They can do an assessment and draft an exercise plan for your loved one. Ben needs help with his posture and core control to improve his swimming so they focus on that.

If you are needing additional support, advice or in-school sessions, reach out to Down Syndrome NSW. We offer expert information, resources, behaviour support, inclusion workshops, school consultations and training.



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