



Therapies for Kids Information Sheet

Physiotherapy Leg Stretches



Many children have tight muscles in their legs. This can be manifest by any number of causes from Children with neurological conditions to children simply sitting at a desk / computer for too long. Physiotherapists often prescribe stretches and outlined below are some simple stretches - please check with your therapist to see if these are appropriate.

Calf muscle stretching



To increase the length or maintain the length of the muscles which point the toes and foot downwards.

Soleus muscle: Ask your child to get into a lying position on the floor or a bed. Support the leg that you are stretching, with one hand at the knee and one hand at the ankle. The knee is bent to 90 degrees. Cup the ankle with your hand. Using your forearm, bend the foot up towards the face, without moving the whole leg. Hold for 20 seconds minimum, relax. Repeat x 5



In addition to passive stretches you can encourage your child to do functional stretches.

Squats (Frog) - ask your child to squat down - keep their heels on the floor with their feet straight and parallel with their bottom just clear of the floor. Hold for as long as they are comfortable - slowly stand up - repeat x 5

Gastocnemius muscle: Ask your child to get into a lying position on the floor or a bed. Support the leg that you are stretching, with one hand at the knee and one hand at the ankle. The knee is bent to 90 degrees. Cup the ankle with your hand. Using your forearm, bend the foot up towards the face. Hold this ankle position and at the same time, straighten the knee. Hold for 20 seconds minimum, relax. Repeat twice.

In addition to passive stretches you can encourage your child to do functional stretches.

Heel walking (Penguin Walk) -ask your child to lift their toes to walk on their heels keeping their feet parallel. Walk for 10 metres x 5

Stand on a Step (Heel Drops) - ask your child to stand on a low step on the balls of their feet (you may need to assist their balance) with their heels overhanging. Then ask them to gently lift their toes and drop their heels - hold for 10 secs x 5



Hamstring stretch

To increase the length of or maintain the length of the muscles on the back of the thighs. 

Ask your child to get into a lying position on the floor or a bed. Slowly take the leg you are stretching up towards their chest keeping the knee straight. When you feel resistance or your child complains of pain STOP and HOLD. Ensure that the other leg is flat down on the bed. Hold for 20 seconds minimum, relax. Repeat x 5

In addition to passive stretches you can encourage your child to do functional stretches.

Leg Lifts (Stork Stand) - have your child stand on 1 leg, lift the other up onto a chair with the knee straight and gently lean forwards towards their toes - hold for 20 secs. Repeat x 5. Repeat with the other leg.

Bear Standing - with your child standing straight with their arms extended parallel to the ground, have them lean forward onto a low support while keeping their knees and back straight. Hold for 20 secs - Repeat x 5. As they improve - lower the height of the support.

Calf and hamstring stretch in long sitting

To increase the length or maintain the length of the muscles on the back of the thigh and lower leg.

Ask your child to sit against a wall with their legs out in front and their back straight. Make sure that their knees are kept straight and feet point upright. Goal for total time spent in this position per day = 30 mins. This may be in a series of 5 minute periods.



Disclaimer

This is intended to support, not replace, discussion with your doctor or healthcare professionals. This information sheet has been compiled from various publications and considerable effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate, up to date and easily understood. Therapies for Kids accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies, information perceived as misleading, or the success of any treatment regimen detailed in this information sheet.