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# Sensory Exercises

## About Sensory Exercises

The following movement-based exercises aim to improve mobility and coordination. These exercises have been designed for people with Complex disabilities but can be enjoyed by anyone.

## Outcomes from Sensory Exercises

These activities could support everyday tasks. They give you the choice to decide how and when to complete the exercises. They give you an opportunity to try something new and challenging. They promote health and fitness and give you the opportunity to explore.

## Top Tips

1. If you are a support worker, you can support participants by gently guiding their arms or legs into position.
2. You can use household objects or surfaces to make exercises more sensory, you will find examples below.
3. You can make the exercises harder or easier as you see fit using the examples.

## Exercise 1: Squat Jumps

The poster shows three pictures:

1. A person standing in a natural position with feet shoulder width apart.
2. A person bending knees whilst raising arms out in front for balance.
3. A person jumping into the air, legs straight and arms by their sides.

Complete this exercise in three stages. Start by standing in a natural position with your feet shoulder width apart. Then slowly bend your knees until you are in a squat position, use your arms for balance. When you feel ready, straighten your knees and jump upwards into the air landing safely on bent knees again.

* To make this easier, you can try only bending your knees and do not jump.
* To make this harder, you can try standing in a wider stance before squatting and jumping.
* To make this more sensory, try doing it barefoot on different surfaces such as grass.

## Exercise 2: Chair Squats

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person standing behind a chair with their arms held out in front, holding the back of the chair for balance.
2. A person bending their knees and lowering into a squat position, using the chair for balance.

Complete this exercise in two stages. Start in a standing position behind a chair. Then slowly bend your knees and lower yourself into a squat position, go as low as you can whilst using the chair for balance, then stand back up into starting position.

* To make this easier, you can use something taller than a chair to balance on.
* To make it harder, you can try removing the chair.
* To make it more sensory, you could place an object on the back of the chair.

## Exercise 3: Seated Reach

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person in seated in a wheelchair.
2. A person seated in a wheelchair, raising their arms above their head.

Complete this exercise in two stages. Start in a seated position, then slowly raise your arms up above your head, reaching as far as you can.

* To make this easier, you can try using one arm at a time.
* To make it harder, place a target to reach for and move.
* To make it more sensory, you can try using different tactile objects to reach and feel.

## Exercise 4: Arm Circles

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person standing with their arms extended either side, making a T shape.
2. A person seated in a wheelchair with their arms extended either side.

To complete this exercise, raise your arms out either side. Then gently move your arms in a circular motion.

* To make this easier, try using only one arm at a time or make smaller circles.
* To make it harder, you can try holding something heavy in each hand.
* To make it more sensory you can try holding different tactile objects in each hand.

## Exercise 5: Side Bends

1. A person seated, raising left arm above head and leaning body to the right.
2. A person seated, raising right arm above head and leaning body to the left.

To complete this exercise, you can be seated or standing. Raise one arm up above your head and lean your body. Then repeat the other side.

* To make this easier, you can try keeping your arms lowered and only lean your body to one side.
* To make it harder, you can try holding the position for longer.
* To make it more sensory, try placing a tactile object to reach for.

## Exercise 6: Head Swivels

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person seated in a wheelchair, rotating their head to look over their right shoulder.
2. A person seated in a wheelchair, rotating their head to look over their left shoulder.

To complete this exercise, you can be seated or standing. Start by looking forwards, then slowly rotate your head left and right, looking over each shoulder.

* To make this easier, you can try a smaller range of movement.
* To make it harder, you can try touching your shoulder with your chin.
* To make it more sensory, you can try adding stimulation such as fan blowing air or use bright lights to look at.

## Exercise 7: Standing Lunges

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person standing in a natural position with feet shoulder width apart.
2. A person in a lunge position.

To complete this exercise, start by standing before taking a large step forward. Then bend both knees whilst keeping your head and chest upright.

* Make this easier by taking a smaller step forward.
* You can make this harder by taking a longer step.
* You can make this more sensory by using different surfaces.

## Exercise 8: Leg raises

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person seated in a wheelchair, extending left leg.
2. A person seated in a wheelchair, extending right leg.

To complete this exercise, start in a seated position. Slowly extend one leg at a time by straightening the knee.

* To make this easier, you use a smaller range of movement.
* To make it harder, try placing a target to reach with your foot.
* To make this more sensory, try completing barefoot with tactile targets.

## Exercise 9: Heel Raises

The poster shows two pictures:

1. A person sat in a chair.
2. A person sat in a chair with their heels lifted off the ground.

To complete this exercise, start in a seated position and slowly lift your heel off the ground whilst keeping your toes pointed downward. Alternate between each foot.

* To make this easier, you can use a smaller range of movement.
* To make this harder, try using both feet at the same time.
* To make it more sensory, try doing barefoot and placing a tactile surface underfoot.

## Tactile object and surfaces

Examples of tactile objects include, balls, ribbons, bells, woolly jumpers, pillows, rice, tin foil, sponge, beads, buttons, cotton, seashells, shaving foam.

Examples of tactile surfaces include, grass, wood, bark, sand, shredded paper, carpet.

## Contact Us

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