

# Fitness Programming for *Special Needs*

## Designing a fitness program for individuals with special needs

requires an understanding of the medical, physical and cognitive abilities or disabilities of each individual. Below is a list of disabilities or (special needs) with recommended Exercise programs.

**Cerebral Palsy** is a disorder that is caused by damage to a child's brain early in the course of development. This disorder is commonly associated with a child's inability to coordinate body movements.



There are 3 major types of cerebral palsy:

**Spastic cerebral palsy** is associated with stiffness of muscles that can be isolated to one part of the body or affect all four limbs and the trunk.

**Athetotic cerebral palsy** affects the entire body and often causes uncontrolled, slow movements.

**Ataxic cerebral palsy** affects balance and coordination.

### Exercises:

Improve balance, coordination, core strength and mobility through gait training, multiplanar movement patterns and quadruped positions.

**Multiple Sclerosis** is a disease that affects your central nervous system.

### Exercises:

Spatial awareness training, gait training, postural conditioning, swimming.

## Autism Spectrum Disorders

are a group of developmental disorders often associated with poor social interaction, language and behavior.

### Exercises:

Agility ladder to improve balance and coordination. Crawling patterns to develop core strength and motor control. Stability ball to address stimulus and improve

focus. Postural conditioning. Trampoline and bosu ball as a reward and to further develop core control. Physical contact may prove difficult with some but very beneficial with others.

**Down Syndrome** is a genetic disorder that causes mental retardation. Physical symptoms associated with Down syndrome are low muscle tone and excessive flexibility. Individuals with Down syndrome may also have trouble with weight issues.



### Exercises:

Primal movement patterns (crawling, rolling sitting up) to improve core strength, postural muscles and coordination. Development of primary muscles to improve muscle tone.

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

is a chronic disorder normally associated with hyperactivity and impulsive behavior.

ADHD falls into two categories:

**Inattention and Hyperactivity-impulsive behavior**

### Exercises:

Circuit based training with short intervals of work followed by running or jumping. Utilize the running and jumping to fill the need for movement then try to perform specific task (squats, pushups, sit ups). Must be willing to change on the fly and

recognize the planned program may not work that day.

**Summary:** All individuals will benefit from an overall conditioning program involving body weight training, improved muscle tone and coordination, balance training and core conditioning. Each individual is unique and will require special attention. The ability to recognize behavior, good and bad stimulus and the willingness to change the routine to allow for success are keys to a successful fitness program.

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## PHYSICAL FITNESS TRAINING

for children and adults with special needs.

### Numerous Benefits:

Allows for release of positive and or negative energy

Builds self-esteem

Improves social interaction

Improves focus and function of daily living skills

Weight loss

Reduction of anxiety

Have fun while improving health

### Current Programs:

Group training with disabled adults

1:1 work with autistic children, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, adhd

Childhood obesity "Shape Your Future" program

Off-site program development for group homes

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