



THE JEFFRAS' PROGRAM THAT PROMOTES
A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
FOR STUDENTS WITH SPINA BIFIDA

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION (APE)

Physical activity is necessary for social and physical development, but the functional level (orthopedic, neuromuscular, social, and cognitive) of a child with Spina Bifida (SB) varies according to level and severity of the deformity, presence of hydrocephalus and other associated conditions.

There is no specific physical education program that can apply to all children with SB.

Consider the following for developing an adapted physical education plan for a student with SB:

- Deformities (hip, knee, foot, and scoliosis) may limit safe participation and require bracing (AFO's KFO's), crutches for ambulation, a wheelchair or a walker.
- Hydrocephalus requiring a ventricular shunt occurs in most students with the severe form of SB (myelomeningocele). The shunt is used to remove excessive cerebrospinal fluid from the head and prevent brain damage. Children with hydrocephalus should be included in normal activities but avoid those which could cause head or neck injury, and impede proper shunt function, such as neck twisting or hanging upside down for extended periods.
- Bowel and bladder accidents may occur during physical activity. Children with SB should be permitted to use the bathroom for catheterization, bowel management or to change soiled clothing as needed.
- Abdominal, orthopedic or neurological surgeries are common in children with SB. Postoperative orders should be followed until the child is healthy enough for full participation.
- Avoid using latex products in the physical education environment. (Refer to latex list in schools, courtesy of Latex Allergy Association of America).
- When planning physical education activities, consider that children with SB may have hand-eye limitations and slower response times.
- Cognitive function varies in children with SB. Cognitive function includes: attention span, ability to compete or self advocate, developmental stage in relation to chronological age, the ability to follow instructions, understand rules, use equipment and be safe in the physical environment should be given consideration.
- With awareness and thoughtful planning, the APE environment, can be safely and creatively modified to suit the needs of the student with special needs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Physical Activities for Young People with Severe Disabilities (Canales & Lytle, 2011)
www.pecentral.org/adaptedphysed



This information does not constitute medical advice for any individual. As specific cases may vary from the general information presented here, SBA advises readers to consult a qualified medical or other professional on an individual basis.

www.spinabifidaassociation.org • 1600 Wilson Blvd. • Suite 800 • Arlington, VA 22209 • 800-621-3141