Hypermobility - Occupational Therapy Advice

If your child has hypermobile joints they have too much movement in their joints. This can occur with a few joints or all joints. Hypermobility does not cause problems in all children however for children whose supporting/stabilising muscles are weaker, it can cause some of the difficulties listed below. It is important to know that hypermobility is a lifelong condition and ongoing management is fundamental. Growth spurts, lack of exercise or an illness can sometimes increase the symptoms.

**Fatigue** – children may complain of general fatigue because they are working hard to maintain joint position due to laxity in the joints. You may find your child experiences joint or muscle fatigue.

**Pain** – children often experience joint pain because their joints and muscles are working harder to stabilise the joint. If a child has sufficient strength to stabilise and support a hypermobile joint they are unlikely to have pain symptoms. Repetitive activities may also be a contributory factor and should be paced and regular rest breaks scheduled.

**Poor coordination** – children may appear less coordinated and clumsy and have more accidents.

**Difficulties with daily living tasks** – children may find holding a pencil difficult and managing zips and small fastenings. They may be slower than their peers.

**Knowing where joints are in space** – children may have difficulties feeling where their bodies are without looking as the required receptors are located in our joints.
Strategies

Joint protection

• Encourage your child to move each joint through its full range of motion once a day. Keep movements slow and gentle.
• Encourage your child to understand and respect any pain. By noting the activity that stressed a joint you can help the child to learn to avoid repeating that movement.
• Encourage your child to be careful how they use their hands. Stressful positions and techniques may increase the risk of putting extra stress on the joints.
• Avoid making a tight fist. Try to use larger handled objects such as chunky pencils.
• Try not to pinch items between the thumb and fingers for too long such as when holding a book.

Good body mechanics

• Carry objects with the palms open distributing the weight evenly over the forearm
• Avoid keeping joints in the same position for a long period of time
• Balance periods of rest and activity during the day
• Allow rest periods before the child becomes fatigued or sore
• Alternate light and heavy work throughout the day
• Take regular stretch breaks.

Strengthen

• Encourage regular low impact strengthening activities such as swimming and walking
• Avoid inactivity
• Regular gentle physical activity as being overweight can add extra stress on joints