



Information for parents – Psychomotor therapy

Dear parents

Successfully developing movement, coordination and balance skills is key to children being able to actively take part in school programmes and activities. Here we aim to inform you about how psychomotor therapy can benefit children and young people with impaired psychomotor skill development by developing their gross motor skills (moving the whole body), fine motor skills (manual activities) and handwriting skills (writing legibly). Psychomotor therapy also enhances the child/young person's self-confidence and their progress.

What is psychomotor therapy?

Psychomotor therapy is concerned with the regular and irregular development of motor competencies (movement, coordination, balance). It enables the child/young person to apply the skills they have in processing information, acting and developing friendships in a way that matches their capabilities. The child should learn to deal with the difficulties they face. The psychomotor therapist assesses difficulties in the development of motor competencies and, where necessary, provides individual or group therapy. Providing advice to parents and teaching staff is an important part of a psychomotor therapist's job. As a preventive measure, the psychomotor therapist applies their knowledge of movement and sensory skills and how these develop to provide support in the classroom.

Who benefits from psychomotor therapy?

Psychomotor therapy may be advisable when the child/young person has difficulty in developing movement and sensory skills and in interacting with others. Examples of these difficulties can include:

- Problems with motor coordination, eg balance, clumsiness
- Difficulties with controlling the tonicity of muscles (tonus), eg tension
- Difficulties with fine motor abilities, eg when using scissors, doing woodwork, crafts, building
- Spatial and time perception difficulty
- Problems with handwriting, eg pencil grasp, placing too little or too much pressure on the pen/pencil, handwriting movements and processes that are not automatic to the child, uncertainty in the formation of letters, difficulty learning how to write

- If the interrelationships between perception, thinking, feeling and acting are not balanced, impaired psychomotor skill development can include:
- Difficulties with communicating
- Behavioural problems (restlessness, aggression, impulsive or inhibited behaviour)
- Attentiveness disorder

What can the school do?

Once developmental problems in a child/young person's movement or on an emotional or social level have been identified, parents and the teacher sit together to request a specialist assessment.

Based on the outcome of the assessment, and with the parents' consent, the school management organises either individual or group therapy outside the classroom or an integrated therapy within the classroom. If necessary, the educational psychology services may also be involved.

During therapy various types of play, movement and sensory exercises, and music are used. This enables the child/young person to compensate for deficits, to improve their motor skills, to find a way of dealing with difficulties and to enhance their self-confidence. It also allows for one-to-one treatment of behavioural and movement patterns. The psychomotor therapy is aligned with the psychomotor goals agreed in the parent-teacher talks held to evaluate the child/young person's current level, their personal areas for development and their capabilities.

To complement the therapy, the psychomotor therapist counsels the parents and teachers, is present during lessons and can monitor the child/young person.

The therapy is assessed at least once year in parent-teacher talks held to evaluate a child's current level.

For early years intervention and prevention of psychomotor difficulties, the psychomotor therapist can also work with the whole class (with a focus on kindergarten and primary years 1 - 3), on class projects, individual lessons or can provide the teacher with advice.

If required, children or young people who attend private schools are also eligible for psychomotor therapy. The school governing board decides on which unit carries out the assessment, what intervention is appropriate and where this takes place.

What can parents do?

Parents can play a vital role in encouraging their child to enhance their movement and sensory skills:

- Encourage your child to move around as much as possible. Movement develops spatial perception, body awareness and self-confidence, coordination skills and a sense of balance. In addition, it encourages the metabolism and strengthens the bones. Lots of exercise can prevent the child/young person from becoming overweight, prevents problems with posture and increases vitality.
- Act as a role model and exercise with your child.
- Show your child what kind of opportunities there are for movement inside and outside of your home. Take your child to the playground or to the forest.
- Children also like moving around in water. Take your child to the swimming pool.
- Provide your child with what is needed to do crafts using different materials and encourage them to help you carry out day-to-day chores (eg laying the table, drying up, helping to do the cooking). This develops hand skills and fine motor abilities.
- Play enables a child to learn new sequences of movements. Encourage movement through play with other children. This is also a good opportunity to develop social skills.
- Let your child go to school on foot or by bicycle.
- Help your child join a sports club.
- Keep in contact with your child's teacher and talk to them about any problems or questions you might have if you notice your child has difficulties with motor competencies.

If you see the need for action or want support, ask your teacher to set up a parent-teacher talk to discuss your child's current level.

Information / Advice

For any specific questions you may have about the development and performance of motor competencies, please contact your local psychomotor therapy unit. Your local education authority can provide you with their details.

Visit the following websites for further information:

- www.vsa.zh.ch (→ Schulbetrieb und Unterricht → Sonderpädagogisches), offizielle Informationen des Volksschulamts
- www.psychomotorik-therapie.ch