

Concentration

Children's Therapy Services Patient information

Your child's concentration will depend on various things including their age, how tired they are and how difficult the task is. These are some strategies to help them to develop their concentration. Some of these strategies are aimed at younger children, and some are useful for children of any age.

Remember - children under 5 years old need a minimum of 2 hours physically active play per day. Children aged 5 - 18 years need a minimum of 1 hour of physical activity per day (as per NHS guidelines). Regular movement breaks before needing to sit and concentrate supports children to focus on learning activities.

Encourage your child to stay at the table to play

Your child needs to know how long they will be expected to stay there. They can learn to measure time by using visual cues e.g.:

- Use of timers e.g. kitchen timers shaped as fruit, vegetables etc., sand timers/egg timers, clocks with large faces where a coloured wedge can mark a period of time.
- Try using 'start' and 'finish' boxes - have a start box with selected toys in (these are the ones that you want them to practise) and encourage them to make a choice of two of the activities. When they have finished that toy - they place it in the 'finish' box. If it is particularly challenging, help them to complete the task if necessary.

Provide an environment which is easy to concentrate in

- Reduce visual stimulation - cover shelves, toys etc so your child is not distracted. Turn off the television.
- Reduce noise - turn off the TV or radio. Work in a quiet room and choose a time when other children are doing quiet activities.
- Try changing where your child sits. Some children work best with their back towards the door so they are not distracted, others need to be able to see the whole room and prefer sitting in a corner.
- Use an appropriate height chair - your child should be able to sit upright with their feet flat on the floor with their back supported.

Provide just right positive environment

- Use positive reinforcement when your child complies with request, tries hard and completes the task.
- Use simple, single word commands and requests once you have your child's attention - try to use the same word/command for the same task each time. It may help to repeat the command/word two or three times e.g. puzzle in, (pause for your child to process information and then repeat) in, in.
- Use gestures/pointing as well as verbal commands to help your child to understand what is required. Use photos or picture cues if necessary.
- Give your child a mixture of toys/games that are easy and some that are more complex and challenging.
- Encourage your child to have an exact copy of the book/story that is being read in front of them so that they can relate to it.
- Visual timetables can help children understand what is happening now and next, which helps reduce any distractions about what might happen next.

Contact details

Children's Therapy Services

Telephone number: **0300 019 2936**

For further general health-related information, please ask the relevant department for an information prescription or contact:

The Health Information Centre

Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 2JB

Telephone: **0300 019 8003**

www.uhd.nhs.uk

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