

W Sitting

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“W” sitting describes the position of a child when sitting on the floor knees together and feet pointing outwards.

Why do children W sit...?

Children W sit for a number of reasons.

When a child W sits they create a large base of support and a lower centre of gravity. In this position the posture muscles of the trunk and core don't need to work hard and often not at all! For this reason, it can be a stable position for some children particularly those with lower than average tone, flexible joints or weak core muscles. This makes it easier to use their arms and hands for play. No wonder they do it!

For other children tight hip muscles may be a cause and sometimes, it's just habit.

It's ok when...your child moves briefly in and out of W sitting when playing or transitioning from one position to another.

It's not ok when...this is the only position your child will adopt for floor play and spends prolonged periods in this position.

So what if my child W sits?

W sitting is not generally considered a normal pattern of sitting. However, whether intervention is required will depend on a number of variables and the overall development of your child.

W sitting may contribute to

- pigeon toed walking
- altered development of the hip
- sway back posture
- weak trunk and core muscles
- tight hamstrings

How you can help...

By encouraging other sitting positions you will be introducing variability in your child's sitting repertoire while working on their trunk stability.

Sitting cross legged, long sitting, side sitting or providing a small step to sit on are good alternatives.

If you can't break the W sitting habit, then don't let it be a source of angst for you or your child. Do your best to create an environment for play that supports other ways of sitting.

- Games that help...

Side sitting transfers: start with side sitting on one side, move from this position onto your knees then into side sitting on the other side without putting your hands to the floor. Mum and dads have a go – it's not easy!

Bottom walking races: sitting on the floor with legs straight out in front, bottom shuffle by lifting one side of bottom off the floor and moving forward, alternating side to side. Race your child across the room.

Seated marches on a Fitball: sitting on large ball, alternating leg lifts off floor as if you are marching. You can also play reaching games –

encourage your child to reach out for heavy and light objects at different distances, across the midline and different heights to help strengthen their trunk muscles.

Hamstring stretches: these are important as children who W sit can sometimes have tight hamstrings. Try reading with your child while they sit with their bottom and back against the wall, legs straight out in front.

Compiled by Cathy Molloy – Physiotherapist. Feb 2017.

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