

# COACH DAVE'S CORNER



## Some Homework that Works...

BY DAVID S. GESLAK

**L**ow muscle tone (LMT) is one of the many symptoms associated with the diagnosis of autism. It can be quite confusing, as many parents aren't told how it relates to their child. Under the umbrella diagnosis of LMT, it could mean your child has poor balance or posture, has hyper-mobile joints, difficulty performing basic movement patterns (fine and gross motor), or that he or she is simply weak.

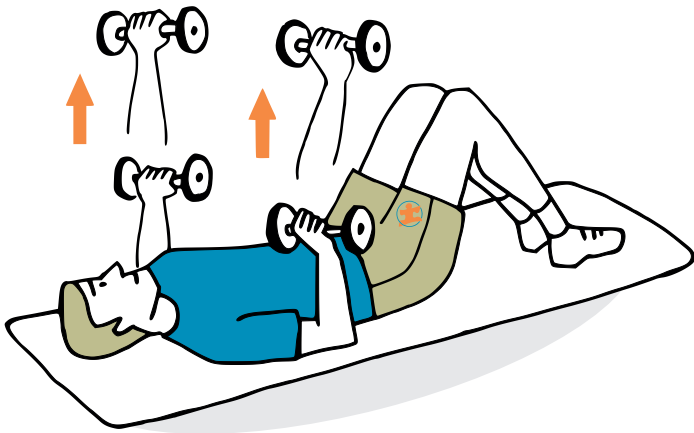
Physical therapy (PT) and/or occupational therapy (OT) are routinely prescribed. While PT and OT are imperative, the reality is that schools can't provide as much time as your child needs and additional private sessions cost more than many families can afford. By adding some simple exercises, your child's LMT can improve, his sensory integration needs can be fulfilled, and you have set him on his way to achieving the exercise connection.

Here are two exercises to start at home with your child:

### DUMBBELL FLOOR PRESS

#### OBJECTIVE

To strengthen the muscles of the upper body (pectorals—chest, deltoids—shoulder, triceps—back of arms).



#### DAVID S. GESLAK, BS, ACSM-HFS, CSCS ...

...Coach Dave, founder of the Exercise Connection (EC), is widely recognized for the pioneering of structured visual exercise programs, as well as his insightful and dynamic presentations. Dave has experience as a para-educator and was a Fitness Coordinator at Giant Steps, a school for children with autism. He is an author, advocate, hosts a TV Show "Coach Dave" on The Autism Channel, and trains parents and professionals across the world on his protocols. He employs individuals with autism at the EC and is developing the first employment program, incorporating exercise, within Hart Schaffner Marx, a company in Chicago. The autism community has enthusiastically embraced Dave's message and is especially encouraged by his results. ◀

#### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Have the child lie on his back with knees bent, feet flat, and neck relaxed.
- 2 Hand the child the dumbbells. Next, hold your hands over the child's chest and have him push the dumbbells toward your hands.
- 3 Have the child return the dumbbells back to the starting position, tapping the back of his arms on the ground and repeat the exercise.
- 4 Always begin with lower weight dumbbells.

#### REPETITIONS

- ▶ Perform one to three sets of 5 – 15 repetitions each. Less is always more.

#### COACHING TIPS

- ▶ You must assist or spot the child during this exercise. Do not assist at the wrists; hold or spot the dumbbells!
- ▶ If you have a bench for your child you can use it but that may be more appropriate for a teenager or adult. Lying on the ground may be safer and allow him to control the movement better.

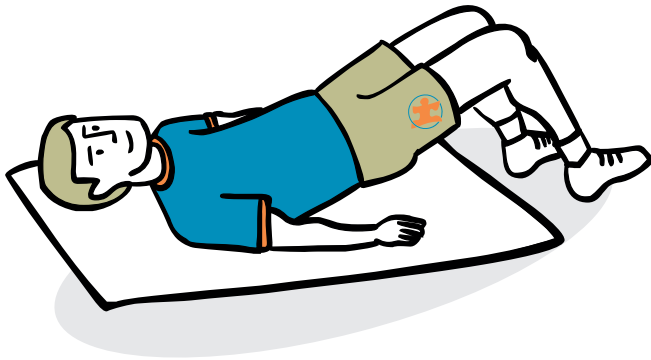


Push-ups are tough to complete correctly for our children. Providing similar benefits to the push-up, the Dumbbell Press can help build confidence, increase self-esteem, and improve a child's low muscle tone.

## HIP EXTENSIONS

### OBJECTIVE

To improve the function and development of the gluteal (butt) and hamstring muscles.



### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Have the child lie on his back with knees bent, feet flat, and neck relaxed.
- 2 Then have them lift their butt up so the knee, hip, and shoulder are in a straight line.
- 3 Control the movement on the way down and repeat.

### REPETITIONS

- ▶ Perform two to four sets of 6 – 20 repetitions each. Less is always more.

### COACHING TIPS

- ▶ Try to not let the butt hit the ground, helping to reduce the risk of injury, while challenging the muscles.
- ▶ If the child begins doing this exercise fast, that's OK—they're moving! In future workouts, coach them and demonstrate to make it a more controlled movement.

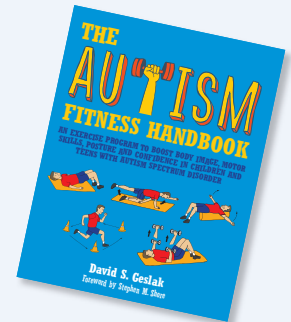


Hip Extensions will help to reduce the risk of lower back pain by developing the gluteal (butt) and hamstring muscles.

### FIND OUT MORE

Coach Dave's new book has been designed to help parents and professionals successfully achieve the exercise connection.

[www.ikp.com/usa/catalogsearch/result/?q=autism+fitness+handbook](http://www.ikp.com/usa/catalogsearch/result/?q=autism+fitness+handbook)



The Visual Exercise System iPad App is due out in the Spring of 2015. Sign up on the EC email list for updates.

[www.visualexercisystem.com](http://www.visualexercisystem.com)



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