



## PROGRESSIVE BEGINNINGS *Rehabilitation Specialists*

Updates for patients, families & friends

### Benefits of Aquatic Therapy for Spina Bifida

Aquatic therapy is a highly effective approach for children with spina bifida offering physical, occupational, and speech therapy benefits in a safe and engaging water environment. Here are four key advantages:

**1 Improved Mobility and Strength** – Water’s buoyancy reduces the effects of gravity allowing children to move more freely. This helps build muscle strength, improve balance, and enhance flexibility, supporting functional mobility.



**2 Enhanced Motor Skills** – Therapy in water focuses on developing fine and gross motor skills, improving coordination, motor planning, and sensory integration essential for daily activities.

**3 Better Endurance and Cardiovascular Health** – Water resistance provides gentle yet effective strengthening and conditioning, helping children build stamina and overall fitness without high-impact stress on joints.



**4 Speech and Breath Control** – Aquatic speech therapy incorporates activities that promote better breath control, vocalization, and oral motor skills in a fun, motivating setting.

Aquatic therapy empowers children with spina bifida to gain strength, independence, and confidence, helping them reach their developmental milestones while having fun.



### OVERVIEW:

- Benefits of Aquatic Therapy for Spina Bifida
- National Hat Day: Building Dressing Skills with Occupational Therapy
- What to Look for in a Shoe
- Winter Activities to Build Proprioception for Kids

### Upcoming Events:

- 1/1: New Year's Day: CLINIC CLOSED
- 1/3: International Mind-Body Wellness Day
- 1/8: Hailey, OT 1 Year PB Anniversary
- 1/15: National Hat Day
- 1/17: Katie, PT 3 Year PB Anniversary
- 1/16: Hailey, OT Birthday
- 1/19: John, OT & Nicki, OT 26 Year PB Anniversary
- 1/19: Happy Birthday, PB! National Popcorn Day!
- 1/20: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 1/24: National Compliment Day
- 1/31: Backward Day



### Shout outs!

- Our OT does a wonderful job with my great granddaughter! When I go to pick her up, she doesn't want to leave! Thank you for making positive, fun therapy sessions for her!
- Our experience has been great right from the beginning. The therapists are very thorough and helpful. They have made my child very comfortable with the whole process.



Shop our FAVORITE THINGS!



National Hat Day on January 15th is a fun and festive reminder of the importance of dressing skills in child development. For many children, learning to dress independently is an essential step toward confidence and self-sufficiency. Occupational therapists play a key role in helping children develop the motor, sensory, and cognitive skills needed to master dressing tasks. Occupational therapy focuses on improving fine motor coordination, hand strength, and dexterity to help children manipulate buttons, zippers, snaps, and laces. Therapists also address challenges with balance and body awareness, enabling children to manage clothing more effectively. Additionally, children with sensory sensitivities may struggle with certain fabrics or textures, and occupational therapists can provide strategies to increase comfort and tolerance. Through creative activities, visual aids, and step-by-step practice, therapists teach dressing sequences and adaptive techniques, empowering children to dress with greater ease and independence. Celebrate Hat Day by encouraging children to pick out and wear their favorite hat, turning this simple activity into a fun way to practice dressing skills and build confidence—one step at a time!



Choosing a baby's first pair of shoes can be intimidating with all of the options. Here are a few key things to look for when buying a shoe:

1. **Wide Toe-Box:** The front of the shoe should allow for the toes to lie flat with space in between each toe
2. **Velcro:** Allows for easier adjustments in tightness and can create increased independence
3. **Shoe Material:** Try to avoid mesh or rubber materials to allow for increased support
4. **Firm Heel Cup:** When you press your thumb into the heel cup the shoe should not collapse
5. **Flexible & Protective Sole:** The shoe should be able to fold in half while still providing a barrier. You want it to be flexible to allow movement at the foot for appropriate muscle development and balance control.

Our physical therapists can also offer additional suggestions when looking for those perfect shoes!



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## Winter Activities to Build Proprioception

Winter offers a perfect opportunity to engage children in activities that promote proprioception through heavy work. Proprioceptive input helps regulate sensory systems, improve coordination, and support emotional regulation. Here are four fun and therapeutic winter activities:

### Shoveling Snow

Give kids an appropriately sized shovel and encourage them to help clear walkways or create paths in the snow. The pushing, lifting, and scooping provide resistance and engage large muscle groups, offering excellent heavy work input.

### Sled Pulling

Have your child pull a sled loaded with toys, snow gear, or even a younger sibling. The effort required to drag the sled builds strength and provides deep pressure stimulation.

### Snow Fort Building

Constructing a snow fort or snowman is not only fun but also physically demanding. Packing snow into shapes, rolling snowballs, and stacking blocks of snow engage muscles and enhance body awareness.

### Indoor Obstacle Course

For days when it's too cold to go outside, create an obstacle course indoors. Include crawling under tables, carrying weighted objects, or pushing a laundry basket filled with books. This provides the same benefits as outdoor heavy work while keeping kids active indoors.

These activities are enjoyable ways to support kids with sensory processing difficulties and can help improve focus, mood, and self-regulation. Bundle up and let the winter fun begin!