

# NUTRITION AND FITNESS FOR THE I/DD POPULATION

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# NUTRITION

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# A HEALTHY DIET...IT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE SO EASY

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- Feeding & eating challenges
  - Affects 7 out of 10 children with autism
  - Affects up to 61% of babies with Down Syndrome
- Extremely restricted food habits
  - Food aversions
  - Hypersensitivities
  - OCD eating patterns
  - Anxiety

# MORE NUTRITIONAL CHALLENGES

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- Chronic overeating/Compulsive eating
  - Inability to sense when “full”
  - Eating as a soothing sensory behavior
  - Food used as a reward
- Impact of medications
  - Increased appetite/weight gain (meds for anxiety, depression, OCD)
  - Suppressed appetite/weight loss/poor sleep (meds for ADHD)



# GI ISSUES

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- Chronic constipation
- Bowel inflammation (diarrhea)
- Abdominal pain
- Gastroesophageal reflux
- Withholding

# STRATEGIES

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- Nutritionist referral
  - Nutritional guidance
  - Set up routines
  - Sneaking in vegetables
  - Keeping foods in “rotation”

# STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

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- Feeding Therapist/Behavior Therapists
  - Oral motor or swallowing issues
  - Behavioral therapy
  - Feeding programs
  - Exercise programs (Kid Fit)

# RESOURCES FOR EATING ISSUES/NUTRITION

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- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/medical-conditions-associated-autism>
- [Exploring Feeding Behavior in Autism](#)
- [Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network \(ATN\) has developed medical guidelines to help doctors recognize and manage these issues](#)
- [Guide for Managing Constipation in Children](#)
- [Pica: A Guide for Parents](#)
- <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/147/2/e20200462>
- <https://www.ndsccenter.org/wp-content/uploads/OralMotor.pdf>



# MORE NUTRITIONAL RESOURCES

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- <https://www.eatright.org/health/diseases-and-conditions/autism/nutrition-for-your-child-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-asd>
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/science-news/cdc-study-flags-high-rate-obesity-among-teens-autism>
- <https://www.ndss.org/resources/nutrition/>
- [https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-DSActive-Factsheet-Parent\\_web.pdf](https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-DSActive-Factsheet-Parent_web.pdf)
- [https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-DSActive-Factsheet-Easy-Read\\_web.pdf](https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-DSActive-Factsheet-Easy-Read_web.pdf)

# FITNESS

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# BACKGROUND

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- Obesity is 2-3 times more prevalent in those with I/DD
  - Medications
  - Sedentary lifestyles
- Poorer health outcomes
  - Sedentary/inactivity leads to multimorbidity
  - Diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease
  - Health care costs associated with lack of physical activity \$117 B nationally (all cause)

# FACTORS

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- Lack of motivation
- Acceptance of sedentary lifestyle
- Lack of caregiver support
- Transportation barriers
- Limited health promotion programs



# BENEFITS

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- Improved subjective health perspective
- Better fitness=better 5-year survival rates in adults over 50
- Decreased risk for chronic conditions
- Improved mental health
- Cost savings on the system
- Improved quality of life

# STRATEGIES

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- Find what interests them
- Include music and games as motivators
- Buddy/mentor programs
- Combination of muscle strengthening (weights/calisthenics/yoga) and aerobic (walking, running, dancing, bicycle, etc.); interval training
- Include health promotion/education
- Special Olympics Level I training for trainers [SO Coaching Resources](#)
- Virtual opportunities for fitness programs

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