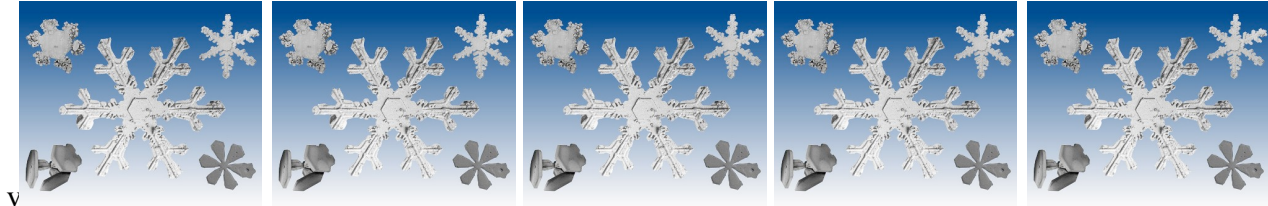


From our February, 2011 Newsletter

## Using Snow for a Therapeutic Workout



While we are all getting tired of winter VERY quickly, all that white fluff outside presents lots of opportunities for therapeutic workouts. OT Natalie Katzourin-Buchsbaum offers these fabulous tips for playing in the snow:

Some children love being in the snow so much, they would stay outside forever if they could. Remember that, as much as you may enjoy watching them have outside fun, you need to keep an eye on your kids when they are playing in snow, especially if they have poor sensory modulation or under-responsivity. Your child might not realize their gloves are too wet or that they have been out in the cold too long. Snowmen are fun, frostbite is not.

If you can't get to your OT session because you were snowed out, don't fret. The snow can be your friend. Take your child outside and get in some heavy work, vestibular input, and even work on handwriting skills in the snow.

Building with snow is a great heavy work activity and also promotes postural control, upper body strength, and motor planning. These three activities involve multiple steps and let your child engage in motor planning skills.

--- Build snow forts/snow walls. Clear some space for your wall. Fill up a container (ex: lego or storage bin, diaper wipe container, ice cream bucket) with snow and "pack it in" to form a "block". Turn the container over to dump the "block" out. Repeat until you have a row of these "blocks". Build a row as long as you want your wall to be. Then build a second row on top. Center each "block" on top of two "blocks" below. Continue until you have the desired height. Use extra snow as "mortar" to fill in gaps.

--- Make snow balls. A wonderful way to make snow balls and work on bilateral coordination is by using a snow ball maker. If you don't have one, take a handful of snow in one hand and, using your hand as a cup, form it into a ball. Be careful not to pack the snow too hard, as snowballs can hurt when thrown. Approach this activity with caution if your child has difficulty with sensory modulation or discrimination.

--- Build a snow man. In this great multi-step heavy work activity, your child starts by picking up a large amount of snow and forming it into a ball shape. You may need to help them push or roll the initial ball in the snow to make the ball bigger. Make a big sized ball for the bottom, then a medium one to go on top of that for the body, and a small one for the head. Your child will be working on fine motor skills when they decorate their snowman. Use little bits of food such as m&ms, chocolate chips and raisins for the face. You can also use materials such as yarn (or a mop head) for hair, buttons for a shirt, or even add clothing.



Making snow angels is a great activity that provides deep pressure as your child pushes against the resistance of the snow. This activity also promotes body awareness, and coordinating both sides of the body.

Have your child lie on their back in the snow, and move their arms and legs up and down as if they were doing jumping jacks. Have them try to get up without "smushing" their creation. Have them first push up on their arms, and then use their hands to push up and forward onto their legs. Step out of the "track" and look down. They will have made a snow angel!



Another activity that involves both heavy work and reinforces letter formation is writing in the snow. This can be done by jumping or shuffling through the snow to form letters, and writing their name or even messages. If you

can find a stick, have your child try scraping the stick through the snow. If you have them write large enough, they may be able to view their name or message from an upstairs window

in your home. And don't forget this activity if you are taking a winter vacation on the beach. Have your child use their fingers or a stick or toes in the sand.

For some vestibular input, take your child sledding. If your child needs more control, have them roll down a snow covered hill. Just make sure there are no sleds nearby!

Finally, for older kids, snow shoveling or using a snow blower (with parental supervision) is another form of heavy work. And it also is a great way to give parents the extra help they deserve :)