



Dear HoG: Skipping Physical Education Classes

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Dear HoG:

Why won't my son's hematologist give him an excuse to skip physical education classes? He's feeling fine now, but I don't want him to hurt his joints and have a bleed that we can't see.

--Protective Dad

Dear Dad:

It's normal to be concerned about joint bleeds and other injuries, but regular exercise will actually help your son stay healthy. Physical activity strengthens the muscles around the joints, giving them more protection. This is particularly important for joints that bear weight, such as those in the ankles and knees. Bleeding episodes might decrease with regular and appropriate exercise. The key is to make sure that your son is involved in the right types of play and exercise.

Most children with hemophilia and other bleeding disorders can participate in regular physical education classes, with the exception of contact sports. It's no stretch to see that football, boxing, hockey and wrestling are considered contact sports. With other sports such as baseball, talk to your child's hematologist about positions that are considered safe and those to be avoided. For example, pitching on a baseball team is discouraged because it may provoke elbow and ankle bleeds. However, the same child may do very well in an outfield position. Supervised swimming, tennis and bicycling usually are considered appropriate forms of exercise. Always check with your child's doctor to be sure.

Exercise and team sports are also an important way for your child to release stress and learn good social skills, such as being a good team player. Self discipline, judgment and reliability also develop better in children who join others in safe types of activities and sports.