

Center for Disabilities and Development

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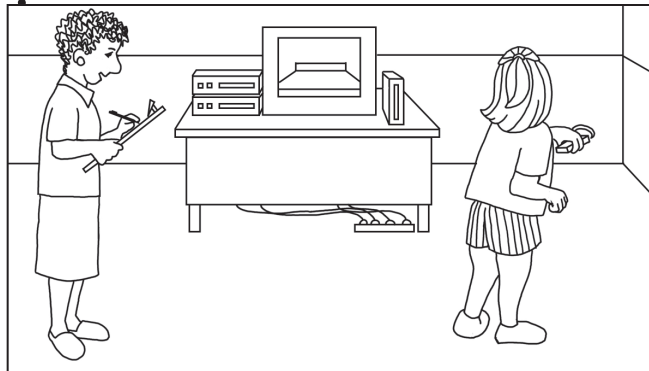
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Using Nintendo Wii in Therapy

By Liza Jochem, SPT

The Nintendo Wii video game system has many potential uses in therapy practice. The Wii is able to blend exercise and physical activity with video games. The Nintendo Wii has a different controller/remote than other gaming systems. The remote is wireless and can detect acceleration and orientation in three dimensions. The Wii Fit attachment is available for balance activities, weight bearing, and some games.

Games for the Wii include a hula hoop game, requiring the person to use hip motion to keep the hula hoop moving, a tightrope game for balance and to narrow the base of support, Ski Slalom, Ski jump and a jogging game for a cardiovascular workout. Other games, such as tennis, boxing, baseball and bowling emphasize upper extremity use, coordination, timing, and shifting weight between lower extremities. Each game can be used in a variety of ways to address treatment goals. Additionally, the system can track body mass index (BMI), weight and time spent playing.



It also allows the player to set goals, such as weight loss goals and encourages the player to play again. The Wii can be adjusted for skill level, starting at basic actions and slower timing.

In addition to the physical benefits discussed above, reported benefits to using

the Wii in therapy sessions include an increase in patient compliance, anticipation for the next treatment session, and a boost in pediatric patients' socialization and self-esteem.

Safety could be a concern with using this device. Gait belts are encouraged for patients with balance problems. Additionally, an evaluation including cardiovascular and pulmonary tests should be completed to ensure the patient is physically fit to play the games. The Wii is contraindicated in patients with seizure disorders.

References:

- Gaudiosi, John. "Wii will rock you." Cedar Rapids Gazette 5 June 2008: D1.
- Coyne, Claire. "Video 'Games' in the clinic: PTs report early results." PT Magazine May 2008: 23-28.



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