

Patty's PT Tips

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Weight Bearing/Weight Shifting

What does weight bearing and weight shifting mean?

These concepts are important to work on in sitting, standing and walking

Weight Bearing (WB) means that body part(s) have the more significant amount of your weight on them. This means the buttocks in sitting or the particular leg/foot in standing and walking.

Weight Shifting means moving the body weight side-to-side, forward/backward, or in a circular pattern.

Why is weight bearing/weight shifting important to work on?

Improves balance and stimulates the vestibular system

It strengthens different muscle groups and teaches them when to turn on or shut off

It can dampen spasticity in muscles

It's essential for safety in all situations

It teaches us to have more sensory awareness i.e. "where am I in space?"

How to prepare for this activity

Good preparation for weight shifting work is some general stretching. A more flexible muscle is a more adaptable muscle. Refer to my February 9, 2022 lecture and handouts for more details on stretching.

Essential Exercises

Sitting--assume an erect posture--chin tucked, shoulder blades down and back, belly button in. Hinge at the groin/hip line as you practice moving forward/backward, right to left, trunk circles in clockwise/counterclockwise directions. Pause in each position. How safe do you feel in each position? This will teach you where you need the most work and awareness. It becomes a resistance exercise when you perform longer holds. Go only slightly out of your comfort zone. Periodically review your posture and make corrections.