The Winning Sports for Kids with Coordination Challenges

Gold Medal (Highly Recommended)
- Swimming/diving
- Gymnastics
- Dancing
- Skating
- Cycling

Silver Medal (Also Recommended)
- Horseback riding
- Track events
- Skiing
- Wrestling

Bronze Medal (Recommended with Modification)
- Baseball

Not Recommended
- Football
- Soccer

This brochure was developed by The Washington University Neurofibromatosis (NF) Center
http://nfcenter.wustl.edu

This pamphlet is provided through the generosity of the Doris and Donald Schnuck Fund for Children in Need and the St. Louis Children's Hospital Foundation.

Coordination and Sports

Washington University Neurofibromatosis Center
**Problems with Team Sports**

Team sports offer a great way for children to stay active; however, it is important to keep in mind that kids who are challenged with coordination may struggle in team sport settings. Because sports often naturally separate kids based on skill level, coordination challenges may set kids apart or cause frustration, especially when they compare themselves to their teammates. The competition present in team sports can also cause kids to develop low self-esteem as they realize that they may not be the best at a particular sport.

**Advantages of Individual Sports**

While team sports may be harder for children with coordination challenges, participation in individual sports is highly encouraged. Children with coordination challenges may actually perform better in individual sports because they receive personalized attention from their coaches and can have practices adjusted to their individual needs. Because children with coordination challenges can struggle in quickly reacting with their entire bodies to a sudden change (such as a tennis ball being hit their direction), sports with repetitive movements are key to success. By limiting activities that require fast responses and movements, children with coordination challenges will feel more prepared and improve in performance.

**Other Benefits of Individual Sports**

Individual sports, such as swimming/diving, dancing, cycling, and gymnastics, are excellent venues for children coordination challenges to receive the individualized attention they need in order to succeed. Although children compete individually in each of these sports, they will typically attend competitions as a team. This team context provides a terrific opportunity for children with coordination challenges to socialize with their peers while cheering on their teammates and not interfering with their own individual success.

For more information, please contact:

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**What is Coordination?**

Many children with NF1 struggle to coordinate their body parts in order to perform a task. A lack of coordination can present many challenges in everyday life including difficulties with fine and gross motor skills. These deficits can be especially apparent when it comes to sports.