



### What is hippotherapy?

- Hippotherapy comes from the Greek word "hippos" meaning horse.
- Hippotherapy is treatment with the help of the horse's movement.
- Physical, occupational and speech therapists use the horse's movement as a treatment for children with disabilities.
- The goal of treatment is to improve function. For example, reaching, sitting, standing and walking.



### Where can I find more information about hippotherapy?

**American Hippotherapy Association**  
[www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org](http://www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org)

**Professional Association of  
Therapeutic Horsemanship  
International**  
[www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org)

**Shining Hope Farms**  
[www.shininghopefarms.org](http://www.shininghopefarms.org)  
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# Hippotherapy For Children

## A Guide for Parents



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### Why use the horse?

In response to the horse's movement, the child positioned on top of the horse actively uses his or her body to maintain balance and posture. Using the horse can motivate the child to give more effort and try harder skills.

### How does hippotherapy differ from horseback riding lessons?

Hippotherapy is provided by a physical, occupational or speech therapist with American Hippotherapy Association training. The goal of hippotherapy is to improve function not to teach riding skills. With hippotherapy, the horse's movement is directed by the therapist not the child. If a child with a disability wants to learn riding skills, look for a riding instructor with Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International training.

### Who benefits from hippotherapy?

Children with:

- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy
- Developmental Coordination Disorder
- Developmental Delay
- Down Syndrome
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Other genetic conditions
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Traumatic Brain Injury

### What does research say about hippotherapy?

Hippotherapy may improve:

- Balance
- Coordination
- Daily life skills
- Energy expenditure
- Gross motor skills
- Head and trunk control
- Muscle tone
- Posture
- Psychosocial function
- Quality of life
- Reaching skills



### What activities are performed on the horse?

Activities are based on the child's therapy goals and may involve the head, trunk, pelvis, and arms and legs. Activities are chosen to develop balance, coordination, range of motion posture, strength and fine and gross motor skills.

### Will insurance pay for hippotherapy?

Some insurances pay for physical, occupational or speech therapy using hippotherapy, but you may have a copay. Other insurances do not pay for hippotherapy.

### How does my child get started?

Before starting hippotherapy, your child will need a doctor's order. A physical, occupational or speech therapist will then evaluate your child to see if hippotherapy is the right treatment.