

Bottom Shufflers

Babies that “bottom shuffle” to move around are a special group of babies. They may appear to be delayed with their gross motor development but if they are a “typical” bottom shuffler they are really just following their own gross motor pathway. If they are a “typical” bottom shuffler (shuffling because that is who they are and not shuffling because of a neurological issue) they do not necessarily need physiotherapy.

A “typical” bottom shuffler may show:

- A gross motor delay
- Age appropriate development in other areas but may demonstrate a mild expressive language delay
- Low muscle tone (but within expected limits)
- Flexible joint movements (may be “double jointed”)
- Good at sitting but usually has poor transitional movements (may appear to be stuck in sitting)
- “Air sitter”, dislike and/or refusal to take weight through their legs with attempts to get your baby to stand
- Likes to circle their feet/hands when excited
- Late walker (18 to 21 months).
- Often a family history of bottom shuffling or increased flexibility.

Using the Alberta Infant Motor Scale (AIMS) with this group of babies may not be helpful as this assessment tool is designed for babies that crawl.

Exercises to assist with transitional movements may help with your baby's frustration levels but will likely not speed up independent walking. Exercises to try could include:

- Rolling practice
- Practice moving in and out of sitting
- Practice moving in and out of kneeling
- Practice moving in and out of standing
- Standing at a low surface with support as needed.

An assessment by a physiotherapist may be helpful to ensure your baby is a "typical" bottom shuffler.



Handout created/revised by Andrea Abbott, physiotherapist, September 201

