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Greetings,

Welcome to the July issue of The Health Bounce!

In this month's newsletter, we'll explore how Active Sitting can be beneficial to you!

To see our products relating to Active Sitting, click [here](#).

We also want to point out our new research section of our site. Learn more [here](#).

• **Coming to a classroom near you: Active Sitting**

By Lisa Witt
Master's Degree, Education
President/Founder of WittFitt LLC

At first it sounds like an oxymoron: Active Sitting. Label the idea whatever you want, Active Sitting is a concept schools are embracing more and more to promote learning and fitness.

Simply put, Active Sitting benefits students by having them sit on stability balls instead of chairs during classes. This type of sitting energizes students, promotes blood flow and enhances core strength.

With summer break winding to a close, now is a great time for parents, teachers and administrators to look at the benefits of Active Sitting. Started in Europe in the 1990s, the concept is definitely "taking off" in the United States. Private and public schools serving students from pre-school to high school have seen the benefits of

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having a couple balls in the classroom for students to share or having one for every student.

These schools recognize that allowing positive movement for students has always been important but has become more urgent as children become more and more sedentary. As someone who spent 13 years teaching elementary and middle school students, I can attest to the need this idea meets. Our bodies are not designed to sit still.

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I believe all children benefit from Active Sitting, with some gaining more than others. One beneficial factor is that children really needing the ball don't "stand out" from all the other students using the ball.

The ever-increasing rates of ADD/ADHD diagnosis means children need this type of subtle movement throughout their day to help them maintain their attention and concentration in a way that does not disturb themselves or others. Though balls used for Active Sitting are the same for all students, children use them in ways that serve their individual needs best. In other words, some children need to bounce a little, while others need to rock back and forth. Some may need more of the activity in the morning to get going while others need it toward the end of the day. Some students want the ball chair as an option and they may go back to the standard chair or even want to stand while working. All of these are good modes to promote optimal learning.

It seems to be a simple way to help learning. Moving while learning can help anchor new concepts. It allows kids the positive movement outlet they need and helps prevent children from leaning back on their chairs or wandering the room. If the child is able to move, bounce and shift on the ball, which is something a chair does not allow, they are more likely to be able to focus and be engaged. Also, the ball promotes proper posture, which improves blood flow, leading to more oxygen being carried to the brain—a key for learning and attention. Further, children are sized to balls fitting their bodies, making them more comfortable.

The benefits don't stop there. The simple act of sitting on the ball, an unstable surface, activates the core muscles (the abdomen and the back) to work and strengthen. The core is very important, as it drives the every day activities we perform. Moving and stretching on the ball helps to improve balance, flexibility and coordination when specific activities are used. Also, the practice acts as a springboard for the conversations we need to have with children about the importance of proper posture, taking care of our bodies, and lifetime

fitness.

How significant a role Active Sitting plays in the school day is based upon the school's wellness/fitness mission, the grade level of the students, the amount of Physical Education classes students receive and the comfort level of the teacher. The kind of movement can be as simple and basic as kids just sitting on the ball as a replacement of the standard classroom chair. A teacher could take it a step further and incorporate breaks in which kids move and stretch for 30-60 seconds on and off throughout the day.

Some teachers incorporate the activities they may have learned through Brain Gym(R), a program of 26 simple movements that activate the brain to make learning easier and more efficient. Lisa Anderson, a Brain Gym consultant in Rochester, Minn., reported that teachers who implemented one stability ball in the classroom were eager to obtain a classroom set. The teachers no longer viewed movement as misbehavior, but rather a signal that the student is trying to keep the brain turned on. Stability balls offer a quiet means to incorporate movement into the classroom and most importantly, stimulate the brain for optimal learning. (More information about this can be found at www.braingym.org.)

Some classroom teachers and Physical Education teachers work together to have students sit on the ball in class and bring that same ball to the gym setting and use it for more advance movements, stretching, games and other skill building that would fall into the realm of a physical educator.

Don't mistake Active Sitting's role in the school day. It does not replace physical education classes; it can strengthen the connection between the classroom teacher and the Physical Education teacher, which benefits the children by sending a consistent message about health and fitness.

The benefit to the students doesn't stop when the last school bell rings. Often parents comment that their child is better at home and in sports as a result of sitting on the ball during the school day.

Parents, school administrators and teachers striving to get the most out of children's education can take a giant leap forward by creating an Active Sitting program.

Lisa Witt's background in education, fitness, health & wellness includes 8 years experience showing people the benefits of stability balls and 13 years of teaching at the elementary and middle school levels.

Brain Gym(R) is a registered trademark of the Educational Kinesiology Foundation, Ventura, CA.

• **FitBALL♦ with Feet**

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Color	Size	Code
Blue	30cm	FBFEET30
Yellow	45cm	FBFEET45
Red	55cm	FBFEET55
Blue	65cm	FBFEET65

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- FBSD - 15" Iridescent blue (packaged in retail box)
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