

# Hippotherapy or Therapeutic Riding

What is the difference?

and how do I know which one is most appropriate for my child?

**Consider your child's specific needs:**

Does your child require constant positioning to maintain sitting balance?

Does your child need frequent assistance to maintain attention or alertness levels?

Is your child under age 5?

Does your child have special medical needs that may require the additional knowledge and training from a licensed professional therapist?

Does your child have sensory integration dysfunction or frequent behavioral outbursts to sensory stimulus?

Does your child have specific fine or gross motor skills to work on?

Would your child benefit most from the horse's movement in private one-on-one sessions?

*If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above,  
then hippotherapy may be the most appropriate choice for your child.*

## Hippotherapy

(Physical, Occupational or Speech Therapy)

Hippotherapy is not a horseback riding lesson. It is physical, occupational or speech therapy, which is prescribed by a physician and delivered by a team that includes a licensed, credentialed therapist.

Hippotherapy is completed by a professional therapist (occupational therapist, physical therapist or speech language pathologist) in conjunction with a professional horse handler and a specially screened and trained therapy horse.

There is direct hands-on participation by the therapist at all times.

The horse's movement is essential to assist in meeting therapy goals.

The goal of hippotherapy is for professional treatment to improve neurological functioning in cognition, body movement, organization and attention levels.

Hippotherapy is a one-on-one medically supervised treatment and generally occurs year-round until the client meets discharge criteria.

In hippotherapy, the treating therapist continually assesses and modifies therapy based on the client's responses.

## Therapeutic Riding

(Adapted recreational horseback riding)

Therapeutic riding is recreational horseback riding lessons adapted to individuals with disabilities.

Therapeutic riding is completed by a professional horseback riding instructor in conjunction with volunteers.

In therapeutic riding, the individual is often taught riding lessons in a group format, which runs in "sessions". The instructor must respond to the group as a whole, in addition to fostering individual success.

There is occasional hands-on assistance by the riding instructor and/or volunteers, but the instructor usually teaches from the center of the arena.

Horses used for therapeutic riding instruction have been screened to make sure they have the appropriate temperament for the job.

In therapeutic riding, the emphasis is on proper riding position and rein skills.