

Lower Body Joint Compression

Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L

Occupational Therapist

Joint compression is a form of proprioceptive input. It occurs when there is compression, push, or weight bearing placed on a joint. It is important for developing body awareness and body in space, as well as for joint stability and strength. It also promotes self-regulation and can be very calming, regulating, and organizing for the brain and nervous system. This is a technique that seems to be effective for individuals with Down syndrome.

It can be used to help with transitions as well as to help calm the body. Therefore, complete this quick activity **prior** to an event that can be stressful for your loved one with Down syndrome. It should only take a few minutes.

For any questions, please contact Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L at 847-318-2331 or Katherine.frank@advocatehealth.com

1. Have the individual sit down in a chair or on the floor. If they want or need to stand, joint compression can still take place.



2. Ask the individual if it is alright that you touch him/her. Once joint compression becomes part of the routine, you can just announce that it is time for joint compression.
3. You can start on either the right or left side and you will plan on doing joint compression to both sides.
4. Place one of your hands behind the hip, just above the buttocks, and your other hand on his/her upper thigh. Gently press your two hands toward one another to provide compression at the hip joint. Do this 10 times.



5. Now, move down so that one hand is directly above the knee joint and one hand is directly below the knee joint. The leg can be straight or bent. Gently press your two hands toward one another to provide compression at the knee joint. Do this 10 times.



6. Next is the ankle. Place one hand above the ankle while the other goes directly below the heel of the foot. Gently press your two hands toward one another to provide compression at the ankle joint. Do this 10 times.



7. Finally are the toes (as long as the shoes are off - toes are not always as accessible). You can either do them individually or together. If you do them individually, hold one toe by the nail and place your other hand at the metacarpal joint, or where the two meets the foot. Gently press your two hands toward one another to provide compression. Do this 10 times. If you do the toes together, put your one hand across the finger nails of all the toes and your other hand across those toes at the metacarpal joint. Gently press your two hands toward one another to provide compression. Do this 10 times.
8. Repeat steps 4 through 7 on the opposite leg.