

Rider Referrals

CanTRA recommends that children under the age of 3 should not participate in therapeutic riding unless there is consultation by a Physical Therapist and supervision by a certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor.

All rider candidates must have a Referral Form before participating in a Therapeutic Riding Program. A change in medical condition requires a physician update.

- **Riders with Physical Disabilities**

For riders with physical disabilities, all rider candidates must have a medical doctor complete a Physician Referral form before participating in a Therapeutic Riding Program. A change in medical condition requires a physician update.

- **Riders without Physical Disabilities**

For riders without physical disabilities, rider candidates must still have a Referral form completed. However, this form may be completed by a Professional such as a : Psychologist, Special Education Teacher, Speech Language Pathologist or another such Professional who has a good knowledge of the individual.

Atlanto-Axial Instability

To a varying degree, approximately 18% of people with Down Syndrome experience **Atlanto-Axial Instability** – instability of the 1st and 2nd cervical vertebrae.

People with Down Syndrome frequently have the following characteristics, any or all of which may contribute to Atlanto-Axial instability:

- Increased laxity or looseness of the ligaments, and occasionally,
- Incorrect formation of the odontoid (tooth-shaped) process of the 2nd cervical vertebra.

Atlanto-Axial Instability can result in the individual experiencing the following:

- a change in mobility or gait
- changes in bladder or bowel function
- weakness and /or numbness in any of the extremities.

In almost all individuals who experience Atlanto-Axial Instability, the aforementioned symptoms can precede actual dislocation by months or years. Such symptoms are therefore much more reliable in predicting dislocation than X-ray examination.

Men and boys with Down Syndrome are much more likely to experience Atlanto-Axial Instability than women and girls. In 37 recorded cases of individuals who experience Atlanto-Axial Instability, most of whom have fully recovered, the frequency of neurological damage is very low. Nevertheless, caution is advised. All rider candidates who have Down Syndrome should have a detailed neurological examination before being accepted in the Therapeutic Riding Program.