

Low Muscle Tone

What is low muscle tone?

Muscle tone is the amount of **tension or resistance** in muscles against movement or a muscle's **readiness for action**. Imagine comparing a muscle to a rubber band. If you loosely hold the rubber band between two points, this represents 'low' tone. If you hold a rubber band with slight resistance, this represents 'normal' tone. If you stretch it tightly, this represents 'high' tone.

Students with low tone use extra effort to complete motor tasks as it takes more effort to recruit muscles into action. Imagine trying to get out of a soft cushy chair. It takes extra effort. This is what it can feel like to have low tone.

How can low muscle tone impact function?

You may notice the following in students with low muscle tone:

- Difficulty with handwriting legibility
- Challenges completing longer written tasks
- Difficulty holding a pencil or other school tools
- Tires more easily
- Difficulty sitting unsupported (rug time)
- Props head on hands
- Slumps across desk
- Challenges with keeping up with peers in gym class
- Frequent readjusting of seated position
- Appears clumsy
- Wraps legs around chair legs



Can low muscle tone be fixed?

Muscle tone is on a **continuum**. Having low, normal, or high tone muscles is often **natural** for the student. You can increase strength, but you can't change a student's natural tone. Tone may change naturally as a student matures through puberty.

Use of **accommodations** to support students with low tone is often helpful.

Info sheets created with ❤️ by occupational therapists for parents and teachers.