

HAND SKILLS



ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE GRIP STRENGTH/GRASP AND DEXTERITY

The following are some activity ideas for you to practice with your child to help develop fine motor skills. The activities will aim to help refine their pincer/tripod grasp as well as improving general dexterity. Activities should be fun and not meant as "exercises". It would be beneficial if these tasks were carried out in an environment free from distractions to encourage them to focus.

1. **Scrunching Paper** - Ask your child to scrunch up paper into small balls (using thumb, index and middle fingers) and throw them into a nearby bin. You can move the target further and further away to make it more difficult. Try and encourage them to scrunch it into as small a ball as possible using only one hand at a time. Paper thickness can be increased to make it more difficult.
2. **Water & Sponge Race** - play a game whereby your child has to empty one container of water into another container by using a sponge. Encourage them to squeeze all of the water out of the sponge on each emptying (could get messy!, probably one for outside or in the bathroom!)
3. **Cooking/Baking** - Involve your child in any cooking or baking activities, especially those which involve kneading and stirring etc.
4. **Pegs** - Open and close strong clothes pegs up to 10 times with index finger and thumb. Make sure they open the pegs as wide as possible. Repeat this exercise using his middle, ring and small fingers. Try exercise on each hand and then on both together.
5. **Clothes Peg Race** - Have a race to see how many pegs they can peg onto their/your clothes, string etc in 20 seconds. Try using each hand and try to break your record!

6. **Play Doh/theraputty** - there are loads of activities you can do with play doh to increase hand strength, grasp and dexterity including:
- Rolling play doh into sausages or snakes. See how skinny and long they can make them
 - Make a big ball by rolling the play doh on the table with the palm of hand (do both hands)
 - Make a pancake by flattening the ball of play doh with one or both hands. Try to make it as flat as possible.
 - Make a dinosaur from snake by using index finger and thumb to pinch spikes all the way down the snake
 - Make holes in the play doh using his index finger in the flat play doh pancake
 - Pinch off small pieces using thumb, index and middle fingers and roll them into small balls
 - Hide items in the play doh (beads etc) try to find them by pulling the doh apart.

FINGER STRETCHES

Ask your child to do each activity as many times as possible with each hand. These will give their hands a good stretch and hopefully ease some of the tension and prevent stiffness.

- ◆ **Finger Lifts** - Place hand flat on the table, ask them to lift up each finger individually as high as they can, hold for as long as possible
- ◆ **Fist & Stretch** - make a fist and place hand on the table then stretch fingers out as wide as possible
- ◆ **Touching Tips** - touch each finger tip with the tip of their thumb. Do this five times on both hands
- ◆ **Thumb Circles** - place hands out in front, fingers together, then ask them to make BIG, wide circles with thumbs, the more he can do the better.
- ◆ **Piano fingers** - to pretend to play the piano on the table

- ◆ **Hand Shakes** - Hold hand in the handshake position. With your other hand hold their elbow. Instead of shaking hand, gently turn forearm to have the palm facing up to the sky. Turn back again. Repeat 5 times with both arms.

TOY IDEAS

- ◆ **Lego, stickle bricks, blocks etc** - the pulling apart and pushing together of pieces is good for working on strength
- ◆ **Threading beads/buttons** - this activity will help with fine manipulation of small items and improves accuracy of movement.
- ◆ **Finger painting** - Messy! But will encourage isolation of one finger at a time and therefore help give hands a good stretch. Try to use one finger at a time rather than using the whole hand
- ◆ **Games** which have small counters or pieces e.g. connect four, jigsaws etc this will help with fine-fingered manipulation of small items.
- ◆ **Lots of pushing and pulling games** - Tug of war etc
- ◆ **Dot-to-dots**
- ◆ **Peg Boards**
- ◆ **Puzzles with Small knobs**
- ◆ **Feely Bags** - Hide a number of everyday objects in a bag (comb, toy car, spoon etc - Anything really). Ask your child to place their hands inside the bag, feel each item and tell you what they think it is.
- ◆ **Scissors** - Use scissors to cut through a variety of textures of paper, card etc. Begin with straight lines then draw shapes with more curves and angles for your child to try and cut out.
- ◆ **Lots of drawing and colouring activities** - When doing so please encourage your child to try and hold the pen/pencil in a tripod grasp (using thumb, index and middle finger). This grasp encourages greater control and more fluid movement. When a child tends to use all of their fingers to grasp the pen/pencil it can reduce control.

These are just a few ideas, I'm sure you will come up with loads of other things to try

