

Arm and hand strengthening Home program

What are arm and hand strengthening activities?

These activities improve muscles in arms, hands, and fingers. Stronger muscles will help your child maintain a better grasp on a pencil, decrease fatigue with writing, and increase speed of fine motor skills. This can help your child work and play better.

How can I help my child?

To prevent injury or overwork, **this home program should be used only under the guidance of an occupational or physical therapist.**

Before working on fine motor or writing activities, or during homework breaks, do one of these “heavy work” activities:

- Wall or chair push-ups
- “Wheelbarrow walking”
- Tug-of-war
- “Push me over” game: the child pushes with his or her upper body against your arms

Upper body strengthening activities:

Do these activities for 10 to 15 minutes **at least** 3 times per week. (It is not harmful to do these activities daily!) These do not have to be structured “workout” times; just encourage your child to be more active. Your child will be more motivated if friends or family members join in.

- ☐ Tug-of-war
- ☐ Tennis
- ☐ Play catch with a weighted ball or use wrist weights and play regular ball.
- ☐ Pull heavy items such as a laundry basket filled with wet clothes.
- ☐ Move wet clothes from washer to dryer.
- ☐ Move furniture or books.
- ☐ Pull other children on a sled or in a wagon.
- ☐ Write on a vertical surface.
- ☐ Use squeeze tongs to pick up objects of various weights, then release into containers.
- ☐ Play with sponges in the bathtub or play pool (soak up water then squeeze into different containers; use colored water if desired).
- ☐ Squeeze clothespins or mini-hairclips onto the edge of a can or box.
- ☐ Draw with large and small pieces of chalk on sidewalk or on sandpaper.
- ☐ Use a sprayer filled with water to wash soap off the tub wall, chalk off the sidewalk, and so on.

Activities to strengthen hands and fingers:

These will help maintain a better grasp on a pencil, decrease fatigue with writing, and increase the speed of fine motor skills.

- ☐ Place Play-Doh® or clay on a cookie sheet and write with a pencil in it.
- ☐ Bury beads or pennies in Play-Doh® or Thera-putty®; then pull them out.
- ☐ Pop bubble wrap with fingers.
- ☐ With scissors, cut thick cardstock, putty, or Play-Doh®.
- ☐ Knead bread or stir dough.
- ☐ Play squirt-gun games.
- ☐ Use a handheld hole-puncher: Punch around shapes of paper and then thread yarn through the holes.
- ☐ Cotton ball game: Squeeze cotton balls with clothespins and see who can get the most in a cup within a certain number of minutes.

Special instructions

Questions?

This home program is to be used only under the guidance of an occupational or physical therapist. If you have any problems with this home program, or any questions, please call your therapist in the Developmental and Rehabilitation Services Department.

Therapist signature

Date

Phone

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