



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Fine motor skills

Issued by children's occupational therapy

building a caring future

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www.northumbria.nhs.uk

Contact us

You can contact us Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm. Please choose the team according to where you live.

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Children's Physical Disability Occupational Therapy Service
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Tel: 01670 564 050

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Minton Lane
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Alternatively, you can visit our website:

<https://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/our-services/childrens-services/childrens-occupational-therapy/>

Fine motor skills require the small muscles in the hands and wrist to make little movements. You use your fine motor skills for lots of everyday tasks such as: writing and drawing, tying your shoelaces and fastening your coat holding and using scissors and during play.

It's important to practice fine motor skills often to help make the muscles of your child's hand and wrist stronger, which will help improve dexterity and control, making fine motor tasks easier to complete.

This pack provides a few suggested activities that you can do with your child to develop their fine motor skills, they should be challenging, but above all they need to be engaging and fun for your child, so don't worry if they don't want to do all the activities, little and often is key!



Positioning

Thinking about how your child is sat or laid when completing fine motor activities can help, in more ways than one. When presenting new fine motor activities, it's important that your child is sat in a stable position initially, where their feet are firmly on the floor and they can rest their arms on a table. When they are comfortable with a task you could incorporate some weightbearing postures which can make it more challenging and fun!



Weightbearing activities

- Crawling – incorporate this into moving around the home, i.e. going to bed or going to the kitchen, making obstacle courses or relay races.
- Wheelbarrow walks – have your child place their hands on the floor while someone holds their ankles, see how far they can walk on their hands, have a wheelbarrow relay race or encourage them to walk to pick up parts of a game from around the room.
- Lay on their tummy – playing with toys / on computer games / watching TV/ drawing etc.
- Four-point kneeling / laying on tummy - playing with toys / on computer games / playing board games, colouring in or watching TV.

Pushing and pulling activities

- Duplo / Lego / Nano blocks – are great for dexterity and the imagination! Start with larger blocks such as Duplo moving onto Lego and then the very small Nano blocks.
- Mr Potato Head – pulling and pushing the various features on and off his body is great for grip strength, it's a toy many children enjoy.
- Pushing a trolley or pushchair around the house or shops, the heavier it is the harder they will have to work.
- 'Squigz' – are great fun, they are available online and can be played with anywhere including the bath, your child can be very creative with them and have an amazing hand workout at the same time.
- Resistance bands – these are readily available in sports stores and online (start with a low resistance band to begin with), they are great fun to play tug of war with, or stand on the band and pull it up with their hands.
- Rubber bands – placing one around the tips of the fingers, see how many things you can pick up around your house, or play a boardgame with it on.
- Cat's cradle – using your hands and fingers to manipulate a loop of string into shapes and forms and taking it in turns with another player. There are many websites and you tube videos with instructions on how to play.
- Baking – cakes are a good starting point for mixing with a spoon, moving onto scones with a thicker mixture and the introduction of a rolling pin and cutters and then to bread where there is a lot of resistance and it needs kneading.
- Climbing – at the park, up and down ladders, climbing centres etc.
- See our advice 'Movement matters' for more activities and leisure activities that will also help fine motor skill development.

Squishing and squeezing activities

- Playdoh / putty / modelling clay – squishing, squeezing, pinching, rolling and cutting it will all strengthen the muscles, using tools such as; scissors, cutter's, knives, rolling pins etc can help the imagination.
- Create organising activities with tongs/ tweezers - see who can pick up the most or the smallest small items and place them in a container! (e.g. Hema beads, cereal pieces etc).
- Bath time – play with sponges and clothes, wringing them out to fill a container, squishy, squeeze toys can make bath time even more fun! Especially the ones that squirt water!
- Bubble wrap – it comes in all different sizes and children love the sound it makes when they snap it between their fingers. The bubble wrap with the smallest bubbles is best for strengthening those super fingers, while larger bubble wrap can strengthen the whole hand!
- Spray bottles, water guns, squeeze bottles, hose pipe with a water gun on the end – have a water fight outside, practice shooting the water at a target, water the plants.
- Hole punches – come in all shapes and sizes, cutting out a range of shapes, combine it with a craft project using scissors and glue and you have a great hand workout!
- Crumpling paper – using scrap paper / newspaper, crumple it up using two hands initially (move to one when they find it too easy) into a ball as tight as possible, then the fun begins, you can a paper ball fight, aim for a target or shoot some hoops into a bin / container

Household chores

These are unlikely to be popular choices amongst children. However, they are fantastic for developing fine motor skills as well as strength.

- Washing dishes by hand using a cloth or sponge and drying them.
- Cleaning windows and mirrors, reaching high above shoulder height, using a spray water bottle and a cloth.
- Folding laundry, matching and rolling socks are particularly good for getting those little muscles in the hand working.
- Cleaning floors, help with hand and wrist strength pushing and pulling the brush, Hoover or mop around the rooms.

Boardgames

- The best type of board games are ones with small pieces that need you to use lots of precise fine motor movement (e.g. pincer grip). For example: Scrabble, Monopoly, Kerplunk and Mouse Trap.
- Card games such as Top Trumps, Dobble, Rummy and Uno.
- Peg board games such as battleships.



Craft ideas for older children

- Word searches, cross words, sudoku and mazes - all these activities require you to hold a pen or pencil and make small movements with it to complete the puzzle.
- Mindfulness colouring / colouring by numbers – there are lots of these colouring books available as well as printable options if you have a search on the internet.
- Scrapbooking / making cards – using scissors to cut thicker paper / card, gluing and sticking them together.
- Try making your own models/ornaments using modelling clay - there are different types of clay available, some are air drying others need to be put in the oven, have a look online or at a craft shop.
- Jewellery making and friendship bracelets that involve knotting embroidery thread, there are different books and you tube videos available to demonstrate ideas of how to make different patterns for your bracelets.
- Knitting, crochet and sewing such as cross stitch - you can buy kits with full instructions for different ability levels, online video's help too.
- Woodworking - the different tools; screwdrivers, hammers and saw all provide opportunities for various muscle movements with their use. Using power tools requires you to squeeze the trigger with your finger for them to work while using larger muscles to safely control the tool.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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