



Grab Hold of These Fun Hand Strengthening Activities

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As your child grows and develops the strength to walk, run and balance, it is easy to forget how important hand strength is to his or her development. Hand strength is essential to many tasks in children's daily lives like picking up and playing with toys when they are little or holding a crayon to color and a pencil to write with as they get older, and completing self-care tasks like buttons and zippers. Appropriate hand strength allows children to develop and maintain the necessary grasps for these activities.

Typically, children develop hand strength naturally – first by supporting themselves on their arms and crawling and then through basic play activities. But, there are many activities you can incorporate into your child's routine to help strengthen the muscles of the hands.

Here are my top ten, super fun hand strengthening activities:

1. Use spray bottles to water plants and rinse dishes or to play games outside or in the bathtub.
2. Play with playdoh or molding clay. Hide objects in the playdoh and have children find them. Encourage your child to pinch and pull apart the clay.
3. Use plastic or wooden clothespins to hang pictures on a string.
4. Use a single hole punch to punch holes in paper of varying thickness.
5. Have your child help you in the kitchen kneading dough and mixing batter.
6. Play with resistive toys like legos.
7. Have animal walk races: crawl like a bear or a crab, squirm like a snake or jump like a frog.
8. Use over-sized tweezers or kitchen tongs to pick up objects.
9. Encourage your child to climb on playground equipment like monkey bars.
10. Crumple up sheets of newspaper into balls and throw them into baskets or at a target.

The key to all these activities is to make them fun! Remember that children develop strength and motor skills at different times. If you have concerns about your child's development, don't hesitate to contact MTC for information regarding a free screening from one of our licensed and credentialed occupational therapists.

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