

Pediatric Development Center



~ Newsletter ~
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We provide occupational therapy evaluation, treatment and consultation for children with developmental delays, autism/Asperger, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, sensory processing disorders, attention, behavioral concerns, handwriting, and other areas of weakness. Contact us for further information:

125 Presumpscot St.
Portland, ME.
(207) 699-5531

Good Resources:

www.AOTA.org

Sensational Kids

By: Lucy Miller

Lighten Up! Pack it Light, Wear it Right

Never let a child carry more than 15% of their body weight in their backpack. Load heaviest items closest to their back and don't let materials slide. Make sure to check what your child is taking to school and bringing home. Always use both shoulder straps and make sure the waist strap is secure. For more information see: www.AOTA.org

ABC of Behavior

When analyzing a child's behavior, it is important to look at the Antecedent, Behavior, and Consequence. What is happening just before the behavior, and what is the reward or punishment. All behaviors are either obtaining or avoiding and relate to difficulties in communication, sensory needs, task, object, attention or health. It is important to analyze the behaviors and determine the correct course of action so that we are not addressing the wrong issues. Please feel free to talk with your therapist, or to contact us for more assistance.

Desk Posture and Handwriting

Kimberlee Wing, OTR/L

There may be two contributing factors when a child has difficulty assuming and holding sitting posture

while performing a fine motor task. The first is poorly designed and/or fitted seating. The second is low muscle tone which is observable in many young children. They lack postural stability for making minute adjustments to keep their bodies in upright space. The chair height should allow the child's heels firm contact with the floor. The height of the desk should be two inches above the bended elbow when the child is seated squarely on his chair to write. The slant of the paper should run parallel to the line of the arm when the hands are relaxed and together at midline on desk surface, forming a triangle with the edge of the desk. To increase postural stability, have the child do wall pushups and chair pushups before working. To increase hand strength and coordination for writing, manipulate silly putty between the thumb, index and middle fingers of the writing hand. Have the writing hand do "pencil walks" up and down the pencil, using the finger tips of the index finger and thumb. Pick up small beads with the index finger and thumb and manipulate them into the palm.



Heavy Work Jobs

What are heavy jobs and what do they do? Activities that provide heavy muscle work are frequently used to develop stability for coordination and to promote attention, focus and calmness.

Solutions: Together with your child and family, choose activities which work for you outdoors, indoors, during playtime, work time, mealtime, bath time and bed time. Making a list and posting it on the refrigerator may help. The following is from the "Tools for Parents" by Henry OT.

Jobs and Chores Inside

- * Put groceries away. Include some low shelves where he/she needs to be on hands and knees.
- * Take the cushions off the sofas, vacuum under them, then put them back.
- * Mop or sweep the kitchen floor.
- * Scrub rough surfaces with a brush.
- * Help dust furniture.
- * Clean the windows or the front of appliances (spray bottles are great for hand muscles).
- * Carry the laundry basket.
- * Change the sheets on the bed, then toss the linens down the stairs.

* Rearrange the bedroom furniture.

Jobs and Chores Outside

- * Sweep porch or driveway.
- * Do yard work (rake leaves, mow the lawn).
- * Shovel sand into a wheelbarrow, wheel it to a spot, dump out sand and use a rake to level it out.
- * Carry buckets to water flowers, plants and trees.
- * Recycle (carry a box of cans or newspaper).
- * Pull a heavy trashcan.
- * Stack the patio chairs.
- * Wash the car.
- * Bathe the dog.
- * Complete wood projects requiring sanding and hammering.

Transitions

- * Push heavy doors using both hands.
- * Carry groceries into the house.
- * When traveling, let your child pull his suitcase on wheels.

Meal Time

- * Mix and knead cookie dough.

* Help cook with an onion chopper or other safe kitchen tool.

- * Push or pull chairs in/out of the table.
- * Wipe table after dinner with large sponge and use hand muscles to squeeze.
- * Sip applesauce or thick milkshake through a straw.

Homework Time

- * Chew gum, eat chewy foods or crunchy foods or sip water from a water bottle with a thin straw.
- * Do chair pushups.
- * Say "let's pretend to make the room bigger" and push the walls.

Bath Time

* After a bath, rub your child briskly with a large heavy towel, firmly squeezing his muscles. He can help fold the towel when done.

Bed Time

- * Help fold a heavy quilt.
- * Wear tight flannel or soft snuggly pajamas.
- * Go "camping" with a heavy blanket pulled across a few chairs. Your child can help to set up and take down the blanket.