



Pediatric Development Center

Newsletter September 2007

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.
361 US Route One, Falmouth
(207) 781-4830

Parent Support Group:

We want to support parents in any way we can and would like to have a monthly meeting to discuss your issues. Please call the office to let us know when would be good for you and we will put together a meeting. 781-4830

Handwriting & Desk Posture

There may be two factors that contribute to a child's difficulty assuming and holding sitting postures while performing table-top fine motor tasks.

FIRST: poorly designed and/or fitted sitting and writing furniture.
SECOND: low body awareness, which is observable in many young children. They lack postural sensitivity 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.

Pencil Holding

The best way to hold a pencil is by using a tripod grasp. When using this grasp the hand gets less tired and the movements are more precise. Achieving this grasp will take practice, finding time each day to review the skills will be helpful especially during kindergarten and first grade. Pencil grips can be used to help promote proper grasp. There are many different grips. Finding the one that works best for you will help to keep your fingers in the best position.

THE GRASP:

Grasp the pencil between the tips of your thumb and your pointing finger and support it against the side of your middle finger, which is called a tripod grasp.

FINE MOTOR

Fine Motor skills are requirements for good eye-hand coordination (so a child can draw, write turn pages, use utensils and other tools, build with legos and do jigsaw puzzles), for precise eye-motor movement, for articulating speech and expressing language.

Poor hand coordination skills may present themselves in children who:

- *avoid ordinary classroom activities such as writing exercises, art projects and science experiments
- *avoid the use of tools, such as crayons, pencils, scissors, hole punches, staplers, screwdrivers, rulers, compasses, or tweezers
- *have poor handwriting
- *have poor self-help skills
- *be a messy eater

Poor oral-motor skills may present themselves in children who:

- *mouth and chew food in unusual ways
- *have poor articulation and immature language skills
- use more gestures than words to communicate, because of inadequate control of the tongue, lips, and jaw

Poor oculomotor control may present themselves in children who:

- *have difficulty with basic binocular skills such as visual tracking and focusing.
- *have poor eye-hand coordination

FINE MOTOR GAMES

Clothespin Togs:

What you need:

- *clothes basket
- *clothes (scarves, gloves, ski caps, nightgowns, socks, tee shirts, neckties, etc.)
- *plastic or wooden clothespins with springs.

What to do:

*go on a treasure hunt around the house to find clothes and accessories that are suitable for a dress-up activity. You can either give verbal directions to specific objects or go with them to hunt for items depending on their capabilities.

*have the child select a item of clothing and use the clothespin to attach the item to any part of the body. Encourage the child to be as silly as they want... for example hang a hat from your elbow or a scarf from your knee.

Benefits:

*promotes a tripod grasp that is needed to effectively use common “tools” including forks, pencils and paintbrushes.

Toothpick Constructions:

What you need:

- *box of toothpicks
- *food chunks (grapes, berries, banana, apple, melon, cucumber, peas, corn kernels, popcorn, cubes of cheese, tofu, chicken, turkey, ham, marshmallows)

What to do:

*stick the toothpicks into food chunks to construct

different objects. Houses, scaffolding, robots, spaceships, people, monsters, porcupines, sea urchins, and other creatures.

Benefits:

*improves pincer skills, translation movement, hand dexterity, and bilateral coordination.

ORAL MOTOR GAMES

Through a Straw:

What you need:

- *pureed applesauce, strained fruit, pudding, yogurt, slush or slurpie
- *about 2 feet of clear vinyl tubing or regular drinking straws.

Keep in mind that long and thin straws are harder and short and fat straws are easier...

What to do:

- *suck the food through the straw
- *blow through the straw to make bubbles in the food

Benefits:

*this is a resistive activity that promotes oral-motor development, force, and speech and language skills

- *the activity strengthens eye-motor skills as sucking in makes the eyes converge.
- *sucking is organizing and calming

Kissing Creatures:

What you need:

- *lipstick
- *white paper
- *pen

What to do:

*help your child put on lipstick

*plant a kiss or two on the white paper and use the pen to add details to the lip-prints to create designs, such as birds and butterflies, manta rays, sporty cars, or a tutu for a ballerina, etc.

Benefits:

*lip rounding helps develop muscles in the mouth and cheeks that are necessary to articulate sounds.

These activities and so many more can be found in “The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun” by Carol Stock Kranowitz. It is a book filled with activities for kids with sensory integration dysfunction.

