

**BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOLS
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY INFORMATION SHEET
GRIP AND PINCH WEAKNESS**

Weak hands and fingers are quite common in children who have difficulty with fine motor skills. Because these children tend to avoid the activities that are difficult for them, they don't develop strength at the rate of children who do engage in fine motor activities at every opportunity. Children with fine motor difficulty often use a more awkward whole-hand grasp because they lack the strength and coordination to use finer finger-pinch patterns. Using the whole hand for grasping small objects interferes with the fine control that the fingers can achieve and also prevents the fingers from developing adequate strength for finer pinch patterns.

Suggested activities to increase strength in muscles used for gripping;

1. Child uses stapler or hand-held hole punch to make holes for art projects-such as gluing punched -out circles onto paper.
2. Using one hand child crumples paper into a small ball and throws it into a wastebasket. Child alternates hands.
3. Child keeps a tennis ball in desk and squeezes it as hard as possible several times a day. Child can begin with a foam ball for minimum resistance until strength increases.
4. Child scribbles or colors over templates or other textured materials. This requires rubbing with one hand whilst stabilising with the other. This is an excellent activity for strengthening the muscles needed for writing activities.
5. Child stirs or kneads cookie batter, clay, gak or other materials that have a thick consistency.
6. Child manipulates clay, putty, dough and other resistant materials. Cutting these materials with scissors or a plastic knife also strengthens muscles.
7. Child washes chalkboards and desktops, and wrings out wet cloths or sponges.
8. Child does art activities that require coloring /scribbling repeatedly for long periods.

Remember, any activity that requires pinching or gripping against resistance will increase hand and finger strength. Pushing or pulling with the arms against resistance will strengthen arm and hand muscles. The greater the resistance, the better the exercise. Be sure to increase resistance gradually as strength increases to allow the child to experience success.

At times, it may be necessary for the child to use compensatory techniques in order to succeed in fine motor activities. This may be due to various factors, such as the specific diagnosis of the child, the projected optimum level of functioning that the child may reach or the disruption of the child's schedule experienced due to the time taken to complete tasks. The Occupational Therapist will be able to advise you on when compensatory techniques are appropriate.

Compensatory Techniques/Strategies;

Decrease the resistance of the object to be pinched or gripped. For example, sand the ends of pop-beads so that less force is required for pushing them together.

Increase the size of the objects to be pinched or gripped. For example, use foam tubing to build up handles on utensils or writing implements.

Change the shape of the object to allow use of a more powerful grasp. For example, attach knobs to puzzle pieces for easier removal and placement.

The Therapist may provide the child with specific adapted grips to facilitate independence in activities of daily living.