

Hand and Finger Strengthening Activities

Theraputty and Modeling Clay

Theraputty or modeling clay has more resistance than Play-Doh. Squeezing, kneading and pulling theraputty or modeling clay help strengthen children's hands. To make it more interesting, hiding beads or small coins in putty or clay gives kids the opportunity to use hand and finger muscles to find the hidden objects and to put them back. Use more-resistive putty as the child's hands get stronger.

Cutting and Hole-Punch Activities

By using different weights of paper, such as newspaper, construction paper, card stock or even cardboard, cutting and hole-punch activities can help strengthen kids' hands. These exercises can be as simple as punching holes throughout a piece of paper or cutting a frayed edge on a piece of paper, to copying and following more detailed patterns with scissors or a hole punch. For these exercises, encourage one-handed use of scissors or the hole punch to maximize grip strength in the dominant hand.

Clothespins, Tongs or Tweezers

Clothespins, tongs or tweezers provide opportunity for kids to use muscles for pinch strength in their hands. With clothespins, kids can make or copy designs by transferring the pins onto a grid board. By changing positions of the grid board (on the floor or hung on a wall), wrist muscles can be used in the exercises. Children can use tongs or tweezers to pick up objects and transfer them to another location; make sure a proper wrist position and pinch grasp is used to avoid pain or injury and to maximize strengthening of hand and finger muscles.

Paper Play

Paper can be a good tool for strengthening hands. Using a flat or inclined surface, kids can place their hands palm-down on pieces of paper and then scrunch the paper into balls. This strengthening activity can be graded by using different types of paper--tissue paper, plain paper or construction paper--as the child's hand gets stronger.

Small Building Toys

Small building toys, such as pop beads or Duplo blocks that require the action of pulling apart and pushing pieces together, allow children to work on grip strength and pinch strength.

Squirt Gun Exercise

Squirt gun exercises can help your child have fun while strengthening her fingers. Give a group of kids squirt guns, after filling the guns with water. Instruct the kids to run around and squirt each other. After several minutes, instruct the kids to use a different finger as their trigger finger. Water refills may be necessary. Have the kids continue to play until they have used all of their fingers on the trigger of the

squirt gun. This also improves the children's cardiovascular health by having them run around for an extended period of time.

Thumb Press In Putty

Make the putty into the shape of a barrel before you begin the thumb press exercise. Place the putty into the palm of your hand, then press your thumb into it until it goes all the way through and touches your hand. Try to reform the putty into the barrel shape again, then repeat.

Pincer Grasping Exercise

To develop hand eye coordination, depth perception and test your motor skills, make your index finger and thumb into pincers to pick up small objects. You can use small candies or beads and place them in a cup or shallow container. Practice picking them up, one at a time with the pincers, and transferring to another container. You can also try the exercise with chopsticks or tweezers, says the Children's Hemiplegia and Stroke Association website.

Supination Exercise

Supination involves turning your hand over so the palm faces up. Some simple exercises to practice supination include wringing water from a towel with both hands, scooping sand or water in a scoop or small measuring cup, or turning the pages of a book.

Finger Spread

Using a ball of therapy putty or other dough or clay, roll the putty into a round, flat shape, much like a small pancake, suggests the Illinois Neurological Institute. Place the pads of your fingers in the middle of the disc you just made and then spread your fingers outward as hard and as fast as you can. This exercise will help strengthen the muscles of the fingers as well as the back of the hand simultaneously, offering greater control and direction when gripping a pencil.

Kitchen Activities

Kitchen tasks lend themselves naturally to hand strengthening. Tasks that work the muscles associated with grip include grasping a spoon to stir thick dough or batter, combining a mixture like meatloaf with the hands, rolling out dough with a rolling pin and cutting out shapes with cookie cutters. Grasp and control are required to use a wire cheese slicer. A potato masher, ricer or garlic press requires a squeezing motion. Use an old-fashioned egg beater with a crank handle or decorate a cake or cookies with icing from a pastry bag. If the child can do so safely, peeling vegetables works the muscles associated with gripping.

Housework

Helping around the house leads to hand strength. Beneficial activities include wringing out a sponge or washcloth or carrying grocery bags or milk jugs. Have the child carry objects such as laundry baskets,

platters or large toy containers with both hands. Using clothespins to hang laundry or artwork and popping bubble wrap are other methods of working on pinch strength.

Toys and Games

A toy cash register or piggy bank encourages a child to pinch the toy money. Older children may practice manipulating real coins. Card games offer opportunities to practice shuffling, dealing and holding cards fanned out in hand. Interlocking building blocks or magnetic building sets also exercise hands. Playing with a piano, cash register or calculator also requires pointing and isolated finger movements. Play Slap Jack, making sure the slap is done with a flat open hand.

Outdoor Activities

The outdoors offers many opportunities to improve grip strength. A child can climb on the playground using railings and ladders and hanging from bars. Other options are playing tug-of-war, digging in the garden or sandbox, pulling weeds or picking flowers, squeezing the sprayer nozzle on the garden hose, using a watering can, pulling a wagon or pushing a stroller. Try a sport using a bat, golf club or racquet.

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/106960-hand-strengthening-exercises-children/#ixzz1oMRKlual>

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/152810-pencil-grip-exercises/#ixzz1oMQzJkXc>