



Shoulder Stability and Upper Limb Strength

Good hand function requires stability around the joints of the arm. A good, stable basis is therefore required around the shoulder girdle. This will help good fixation at the elbow and the wrist, which allows for the very refined movement at the fingers, to carry out writing for example.

Activities

- Crab football
- Tug of war
- Waving gym ribbons
- Flying kites
- Park equipment (swings and climbing frames)
- Swimming
- Racket games (tennis, badminton, rounders, swing ball)
- Twister
- Skipping with a rope
- Tug-of-war with a piece of cord / rope / broom handle; helping you stretch t-shirts / trousers after a machine wash.
- 'Row-your boat' (pulling and pushing partner game)
- Wheelbarrows (hold at knees until strong enough to hold at ankles)
- Hanging and swinging from the monkey bars in a playground
- Star jumps
- Making cookies can be great fun and has a positive reward at the end. Knead the dough between the two hands. Roll out the dough with the rolling pin and press flat. Use cookie cutters to make the biscuits and decorate with Smarties and small silver balls etc.
- Playdough/clay – pulling apart, moulding, pinching
- Playing with clothes pegs or placing pegs onto the edge of a container
- Picking up small objects with tweezers e.g. cotton wool balls, rice, Cheerios – drop them in a container. Have the child break his/her own record for number of objects in given time.
- Using construction toys like Duplo and Lego.
- Pull-apart toys with large pieces e.g. Popoids, pop-beads
- Wii
- Pouring items from a container e.g water or sand out of a jug.



Exercises

- Gym ball exercises
- Animal walks such as bunny hops or crab walks:



- Push-ups on the floor or against the wall
- Chair Press Ups: Whilst sitting on hands with elbows slightly bent, try to push body up.

- Theraband exercises. These exercises work on strengthening the muscles of the hands, arms and shoulder stability. Your therapist will advise you on appropriate exercises.
- Theraputty exercises – these exercises could be done with therapeutic putty, plasticene or playdough. It works on fine motor skills, strengthening the muscles of the hands and manipulation skills of the fingers.

Reaching up and completing activities at shoulder height or above is also an easy way to develop shoulder stability. For example:

- Reaching up to work surfaces in the kitchen
- Folding large towels/clothes
- Standing at the dining room table or kneeling so that they must reach up slightly.
- Drawing on paper stuck on wall/door at shoulder height.



Day-to-day activities

Many daily activities can help increase shoulder stability and arm strength. For example:

- Carrying shopping bags
- Helping in the kitchen e.g. holding a bowl and stirring.
- Washing the car/ windows of the house
- Opening a tight jam jar lid/bottle top; child holds the jar/bottle tightly with two hands
- Wringing as much water as possible out of a sponge or cloth whilst in the bath/washing up the dishes
- Pulling or pushing heavy things e.g. raking, vacuum cleaner, pushing furniture
- Carrying a load, such as books, shopping bags, moving a chair, etc.

