

In Hand Manipulation – Under 5's

What is it?: In Hand manipulation is the ability to use the small muscles of the hand to manipulate objects. Explorative and manipulative play usually starts at age 3 months when babies engage in finger play.

Why is it important? : This is a prerequisite for sensory development, fine motor movements and hand eye co-ordination and for developing good manipulative skills. It helps the child understand the permanence of objects and an appreciation of time and space. We use in hand manipulation in order to move small objects within the hand or use tools with precise detail. In hand manipulation is important when writing.

How you can help:

- Show your child how to pick up and manipulate different objects, initially use hand over hand if necessary
- Begin with larger activities involving one object
- Demonstrate to the child how to complete the activity
- Talk about what the fingers need to do
- Offer you child plenty of every day opportunities to handle various shaped objects (if safe and appropriate) and how to practice using their hand grasps for play.
- When more objects required add them slowly
- Ensure your child is sitting with a comfortable and supported posture (e.g. feet on the floor, and elbows resting on the table at a 90 degree angle) or is standing up at a vertical surface.



The following is a list of games and activities to help in hand manipulation:

- Pencil races – Sharpen both ends of the pencil (make sure the pencil is about 10cm in length). The child grips the pencil as if going to write and draws a dot on the page with one end of the pencil, he then has to turn the pencil around again without using his body, other hand or the table for support and draw a circle around the dot. To make fun have races with other children or time to beat records.
- Spin coins on their edge. See how many you can get to spin at the same time
- Pipe cleaners – make shapes and models
- Crushing - screw up sheets of paper into balls, using two hands then one, throw into the bin.
- Threading - Put rings on a stick (curtain ring and a piece of broom handle), Hula Hoops onto finger
- Using a small object like coins, beads etc. See how many objects the child can pick up using a pincer grip then moving the objects into their hand, without dropping any or using the table/body/other hand. The child should secure the objects in their hand with their middle, ring and little fingers. Try doing with right and left hand.
- Squeezing- play dough, bread dough, clay, plasticine. Pull apart, press into shapes and roll into snakes.
- Squeeze plastic bottles, which will squirt out water. Wring out sponges
- Pegs - attach pegs to the edge of a tin or ice cream container to make zoos or farms.
- Twisting - door knobs, jar bottle tops
- Wheelbarrow walks
- Digging - sand in a bucket, scoop out with a big spoon/spade or funnel. If inside substitute with dried beans.
- Hammering - use hammer and peg toy

