



Increasing Upper-Arm Stability and Strength

Why is it important? Addressing the strength of the arms, shoulders, and trunk is very important for success with using the smaller muscles of the wrist and hands. Appropriate strength and stability provide a stable base and proximal support for the hands during fine motor activities. By putting weight through the arms and hands, helps to develop the smaller muscles and arches of the hand.

How can I incorporate activities with my child to increase upper-arm stability and strength?

- Wheelbarrow walks- the child walks on their hands while an adult holds the child's feet. The child can walk on flat, bump, or downward inclines. For safety, discourage the child from locking their elbows.
- Animal walks- a child can pretend to be a variety of animals, including crab walks (child sits on floor, lifts their bottom and walks backward on hands and feet with knees bent) or bear walks (child walk on their hands and feet with legs almost straight in order to bear weight onto the arms).
- Propped up elbows- encourage the child to complete sedentary activities (i.e. boardgames, reading, drawing) while laying on their stomachs with their elbows propped up on the floor.
- Art projects on a vertical surface- using a large piece of paper, chalk board, or dry erase, encourage the child to draw, paint or color on vertical surfaces. This position of the arm address strengthening and development of the shoulder, wrist, and hand.
- Trapeze or monkey bars- using playground equipment, encourage the child to swing or hang from bars. With the child's feet off the ground, they are hanging on with their arms, incorporating strength and stability.
- Push ups- this can be done with or without knees touching the floor. Their feet and hands should be on the ground. They should use their flat hands to push down and up against the floor. This can also be done on the couch- the belly of the child on the couch with their arms down on the floor below. The child will push up and down.
- Wall push ups- the child faces the wall while pushing against it in order to engage the shoulder and arm for strength and stability.
- Magnetic rod activities- encourage the child to complete puzzles with magnetic rods, engaging shoulders and arms against the force of gravity as they use the rod to pick up pieces of the puzzle or activity.