

Factsheet for Families

Supporting children's fine motor skills

The development of children's fine motor skills are important because they are the foundation for the development of many other important skills in the future, including reading, writing and drawing, as well as the ability to undertake everyday tasks such as tying shoelaces or holding a knife and fork. As for all areas of children's development, families play an important role in providing children with experiences, resources and guidance that will support their development through everyday play experiences and routines.

What are fine motor skills?

- The term 'fine motor' means 'small muscles'.
- Fine motor skills involve the use of the small muscles in the fingers, hand and arm to manipulate, control and use tools and materials.
- Hand-eye coordination, where a person uses their vision to control the movements and actions of their small muscles, is also an important component of fine motor development.

The development of fine motor skills*

- Early fine motor development involves babies becoming aware of the relationship between their body and hands, fingers, feet and toes.
- As they develop, babies increasingly reach for and grasp objects, gradually moving from using a 'fist grip' to using their thumb and forefinger. They often place objects in their mouth so it is essential to eliminate choking hazards.
- By 16 months children can do simple tasks such as turning the pages of a board book and completing peg puzzles.
- From 16 months onwards children continue to extend their fine motor skills, and they use these to explore their world and to gain independence.
- From three years children's drawing and writing skills become more proficient as they begin to copy letters, numbers and shapes.
- Between three and five children begin to master tasks such as doing up buttons, tying shoelaces, using a knife and fork and cutting with scissors.

* This is a general guide only. Individual children's development varies significantly.

What activities can support children's fine motor skill development?

- Doing finger plays, rhymes and songs, such as *Incy Wincy Spider*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and *This Little Piggy*.
- Playing musical instruments.
- Doing art and craft activities, such as tearing paper, painting, collage, scissor cutting and threading.
- Adding props such as cooking utensils, cutlery and scissors to playdough, or adding textures such as rice or fine gravel to the dough.
- Drawing with writing materials such as pens, pencils, and chalk.
- Engaging in sand and water play, and 'messy' play experiences such as 'slime', wet sand, mud and clay.
- Manipulating toy animal or people figures, magnets, and doing sorting games using small objects - tongs can also be introduced with these experiences.
- Dress up play using clothes and shoes with different types of fasteners such as press studs, large and small buttons, zippers and velcro.
- Construction activities such as blocks, commercial construction sets, as well as household materials such as boxes, paper, fabric and sticky tape.

To discuss any questions or concerns you may have regarding your child's fine motor development, please speak to:

or telephone: