

Month 6: Developing Hands and Fingers

Infant

Touch

1. Gently play with his/her fingers and hands.
2. Use playful actions involving massage and touching, opening his/her fingers.
3. Rub the infant's hands with different textures e.g. feathers and wool.

A Bowl Full Of...

- Water (lukewarm): move the infant's hand(s) into it. If you do a little splashing it may encourage her to also splash. The key is to get the sensation of touching the water. It gives the infant perception of the extremities.
- Jell-O: allow the infant to play with the weird texture; squeezing, poking, etc will all develop the fingers and hand's strength.
- Sand: bury toys in the sand and assist your infant in digging them out with their hands
- Rice or macaroni: show your child how to scoop up into a small cup and pour into a larger container

Palmer Grasp and Lift

Creating a sensation in the palm of an infant will create a grasping reflex. Allow the infant to grasp your index finger. Move your hands around as you wish. If you feel comfortable enough, you may lift the infant gently off the floor then place him/her back on the ground.

Foot Grab

Place funny booties or colourful socks on your child and this will encourage her to grab her feet and toes. She may want to kick her legs and play with her feet.

Hands Together

Between the ages of 2 and 4 months, gently clap your child's hands together in front of their face when they are laying on their backs or sitting on your lap.

When they are sitting on their own (at around 6-7 months), give your child plastic bottles, pots, pans and blocks to bang together. Give your child a spoon or toy hammer and show them how to tap or hit the pot lid, plastic container or the floor.

Time to Eat

Give your 6+ month old chances to feed himself with finger foods like crackers and dry cereal. Place the food items in a small bowl or container and encourage your child to pick them out – this is a supervised activity as your child remains at risk of choking on small food items.

Strong Hands

After 6-8 months of age, your child's hands are becoming stronger and are ready for a challenge. Here are some strengthening/coordination ideas:

- Provide soft, plastic squirt toys in the bath tub and show your baby how to squeeze the toy to make water come out.
- Provide pop beads or larger lego or mega-blocks that your baby can pull apart and try to push back together (this is a little trickier).
- Cut a hole in a plastic lid of a large, empty container. Show your child how to push small toys through the hole, open the lid and dump them out.
- Allow your child to crumple and rip paper – this also helps your child in using two hands together.

Artist at Work

After 12-15 months of age, begin allowing your baby to explore markers, crayons and sidewalk chalk, scribbling in whatever pattern they would like. This is a closely supervised activity, as your baby will still want to put these things in his mouth.

References:

Nipissing District Developmental Screen (2002). Nipissing District Developmental Screen Inc.

SPARC: Sports and Recreation New Zealand (2008). Developing hands and fingers. Active Movement.