

Occupational Therapy Service for Children and Young People

FINGER ISOLATION

Finger isolation is the ability to isolate and use the fingers one at a time in functional tasks, particularly the index (also called pointing) finger.

It typically develops at around 6 months of age as the child begins to pick up small objects e.g. pieces of cereal. It progresses to pointing, and then separation of the two sides of the hand with in-hand manipulation.

Finger isolation is important in fine motor dexterity, in every task that the hands perform.

Activity Ideas:

- Simon Says – point to body parts.
- Popping bubbles with a pointed finger.



- Popping bubble wrap with a pointed finger.



- Using fingers like 'tweezers' to pick up objects, such as cotton wool balls, pom poms, small blocks/Lego pieces, pasta pieces, raisins, frozen peas, berries etc.



- Using toys that have holes or parts that need poking or prodding.



- Finger painting – encourage the child to use each finger, but one at a time.



- Ask the child to point to things in books / pictures e.g. 'find the....'
- Ask the child to turn the page in the book using fingers rather than the whole hand.



- Playing with finger puppets – move fingers independently.



- Finger Hopscotch.



- Get the child to use their index finger for drawing in shaving foam, sand and/or on a steamy window. Cut the index finger off an old glove to help the child isolate their index finger.



- Play 'finger football' with cotton wool balls/ping pong balls/scrunched up paper balls - flick them across a table to score a goal or use a finger football game.



- Water play, spray paint with spray bottles and water squirters using the index finger on the trigger.



- Poke fingers into Play Doh/Plasticene, slime, dough etc.



- Walking A Scarf: use a lightweight neck scarf (the longer and lighter, the better) or bandage roll. Put a toy or light weight object on the end of the scarf to give the child an incentive to 'walk the scarf in' with their fingers.



- Spread the scarf out on a flat, smooth surface with the ends of the scarf lying flat. Ask the child to use their fingers to "walk" the scarf towards the edge of the table. Start with two hands together and then repeat using one hand at a time.
- Repeat the activity using the thumb only. Position the hand sideways on the scarf/bandage and then move the thumb out and in, to gather up the fabric.

