

Developing Hands and Fingers

An activity guide for under-fives



**SPORT
NEW ZEALAND**

On 1 Feb 2012, SPARC
changed its name to Sport NZ.
www.sportnz.org.nz



What is Active Movement/ Koringa Hihiko?



Active Movement is just as important for newborns as it is for older children. By helping your child to get active, you help their body to develop, you help them to learn and to feel safe, and you show them they are loved.

The Active Movement series of brochures helps you with ideas for fun activities.





? Why are strong fingers important?

😊 It is important for our children to develop strong fingers. Activities that use the fingers help develop fine motor skills.

😊 **Fine motor skills are movements that use the fingers and hands.**

- Playing with baby's hands and fingers is the first step towards developing fine motor skills.
- Any activity in which a child uses his hands will help develop good fine motor skills.
- Fine motor skills take time to develop.

😊 A child's body develops from head to foot and from the chest to the tips of the fingers. It is important that the body is strong so that fine motor skills can develop.

😊 **Fine motor skills are important in developing your child's enjoyment of being active.** As she grows, the games she is involved in require greater skill with the hands and feet. Having good fine motor skills will help in many sports or activities she may try in the future.

? What about writing?

- 😊 Being left-handed or right-handed develops over time and can't be chosen.
- 😊 To write, he needs to be able to do something on one side of his body while the other side does something different.
- 😊 'Cross pattern' activities (opposite arm, opposite leg) help the preferred hand to emerge (e.g. rolling, crawling, walking and jumping).
- 😊 Over time, your child will be able to have one side of the body doing something different from the other side. For example, encourage her to reach for something on her right with her left hand.
- 😊 Your child will start using one hand more than the other when he is ready. For example, he might start always using his left hand to hold his spoon.

? What do I need to know before I start?

- 😊 All activities are for boys **and** girls.
- 😊 It is the **order** in which they gain body skills that is important, not **the age** that they gain them.
- 😊 Remember, when children are active, stay around them to **keep them safe**.



Activities for Newborns and Infants

He ngohe mā ngā Pēpi



These activities can also be done with toddlers and young children.



Touch also helps a baby learn where his fingers and toes are. The more touch, the greater the awareness. Games like these help develop muscles in the fingers that help hold pencils.



I strengthen my fingers by having adults play games with my fingers and hands.



- ▶ Gently play with his fingers and hands.



- ▶ Use playful actions involving massage and touching, opening her fingers.



More activities you can do with your newborn and infant, next page ▶

More activities to do with newborns and infants

▶ Play finger games such as 'Round and Round the Garden' to help strengthen and open the fingers. Toes also enjoy these activities!

▶ Sing songs that extend the fingers and toes such as 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'.



▶ Rub baby's hands with different soft textures e.g. feathers and wool.

▶ As children grow, finger plays encourage individual fingers to wiggle and move. These games require control and help strengthen little fingers.

Activities for Toddlers

He ngohe mā ngā Tamariki Nohinohi



These activities can also be done with young children.



Most children enjoy getting into the sandpit, using play dough, baking and touching different textures. Messy play helps develop skills used in many childhood games, in learning and in writing.

**I learn to use my
fingers in activities that
can be messy.**



More activities you can do with your toddler, next page 

More activities to do with toddlers

- ▶ Finger painting. You could even try this outside, placing paper on the ground and paint with the feet!

- ▶ Playing with sand – in a tray, in the sandpit or at the beach.



- ▶ Gardening and playing in the dirt.

- ▶ Baking. You could then take your baking to the park for a picnic!



▶ Water play. Always stay near your children when they are near water.

▶ Clay and plasticine.

▶ Play dough, slime and other gooey (safe) substances.

▶ Gluing, papier mâché and collage.



Activities for Young Children

He ngohe mā ngā Kōhungahunga

I learn which hand to use by doing activities where one side of my body is doing something different from the other side.





▶ Hammering – children love making their own toys with wood and nails.

▶ Building huts on your lawn with boxes.

▶ Climbing ladders and trees.

▶ Marching.

▶ Hanging washing on a line.



More activities you can do with your young child, next page ▶



More activities to do with young children

▶ Using streamers where one hand is up and one hand is down etc.

▶ Posting twigs, stones and letters in a letterbox at your house.

▶ You may like to make a letterbox out of empty boxes to have inside.



? Where do I go for more information?

😊 This brochure is one of a series of 16 Active Movement resources:



Acknowledgements SPARC (Sport and Recreation New Zealand) express their sincere appreciation to the people and organisations who have contributed both directly and indirectly to this Active Movement resource.



Further information can be found on the SPARC website or call 0800 ACTIVE (0800 22 84 83).

www.sparc.org.nz

