



Month 3: Upper Extremity Strength and Stability Infant Activities

Infant Reach

Place your child in either prone (on tummy) or supine (on back) position on a soft mat on the floor.

In Tummy/Prone position: Place several attractive toys in front of your child (as far as reaching ability). This will allow the child to make a choice of which toy is the most attractive. By reaching for a toy he/she will be working all back muscles as well as neck, chest and arms. Reaching will improve segment coordination and timing.

In Back/Supine position: Hang several toys above infant's body. This will stimulate the infant to reach up to the toys, therefore improving the strength and coordination of the arms.

Crawling

If the infant is able to crawl, have the infant navigate through several objects that may be interesting to him/her. Incorporating objects that will attract the infant will motivate him/her to reach/grasp/move/etc the objects. Through or into boxes, over or under favourite toys, over cushions or over your legs are all examples of ways that will motivate the infant to move farther.

Push-Ups (For Older Infants)

Gently support baby under the chest and hips. Lift his/her body carefully. The infant's hands will extend and remain on the floor and will support his/her upper body with the arms. Note: it is important to support the lower back and not allow him to arch his back.

Patty-Cake & Clapping Games

Sitting directly in front of your child on the floor, or while your child is seated in a high chair, play clapping games and Patty-Cake with your child.

Elbow Stand

Lay the child on his stomach and place his elbows directly underneath his shoulders, his forearms on the floor. Grasp and lift baby's hips and trunk to form a 45-degree angle with the floor. Let the child rest on his forearms. Try to lift the legs up a little higher, but make sure the baby doesn't bang his nose.



Wheelbarrow

With baby lying on his stomach, place your hand under his belly and pelvis and lift the lower part of his body. The child should support his own upper body weight using his arms and hands. Notice that baby holds his head up and looks forward. Having a mirror placed in front of the baby is helpful and motivating for the baby to push up and look at himself in the mirror.



Hats Off

In order to play this game you will need a variety of hats and a mirror. Place your child in a sitting position in front of a mirror and sit behind her. Model putting on and taking off a hat from your own head using key words such as “hat”, “on” and “off”. Place a hat on your child's head. Wait. Provide the key word “off” and model removing the hat from her head. Replace it on her head. After 10 seconds help your child remove the hat. Continue to place the hat on your child's head until she can remove it by herself. Use this same sequence to help her learn how to place the hat on her head.

How to make this activity easier: use medium sized, firm hats like a cowboy hat; have your child remove a medium-sized scarf draped over her head.

How to make this activity harder: use tight hats (knitted snow hats); practice placing and removing hats on a doll (this will require two hands one to hold the doll and one to move

the hat); have your child remove other easy-to-remove clothing items such as sunglasses, a bracelet or large vest.

Musical Pots

You will need pots and pans, spoons and music to play musical pots. Turn on some music with a good beat and get ready for some drumming. Have your child sit on the floor with the pots surrounding him. Show him how to bang on a pot with a spoon. Encourage your child to bang on a pot to the music.

How to make this activity easier: Have your child pat the pots with his hands until he gets the idea and then introduce the spoon.

How to make this activity harder: Have your child bang smaller pots so he requires a more precise target. Have your child bang on pots with two spoons, alternating hands.

Weight Shift on Forearms

Have your child lie on the floor, supporting the body on their forearms. Present a puzzle piece or toy so that the child must lift one arm to reach and take it. After the child places the puzzle piece or toy down present another one. Present the toy directly in front and to either side so that the child must shift the weight to the other arms for support in order to reach. Repeat, having the child reach with the other hand as well. Remember to watch out for the child sinking down at the supporting shoulder when reaching. Support the child at that shoulder and present more objects in front than to either side to prevent this.

This activity can also be done with your child in 4 point (on their hands and knees or crawling position).

References:

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