

Month 3: Upper Extremity Strength and Stability Toddler Activities

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.



Lay Back



1. Sit with your toddler lying between your bent legs, as shown in Step one above. Let her hold your thumbs, while you support her wrists and forearms with your fingers.
2. Slowly pull her to a sitting position (let her use her arms and abdominal muscles as much as possible) as shown in Step two above.
3. Slowly lower your toddler back to the floor.
4. Repeat five or six times.

Monkey Climb

Climbing is a great way to strengthen the upper body. Start with supervising your child climbing up stairs on hands and feet. Allow your child to explore climbers at the playground, supervising appropriately as he/she climbs up the ladder of slides and climbers. At home, in the backyard, you can place a ladder flat in the grass and ask the child to climb along the rungs on hands and feet. You can progress this by creating a small incline, propping one end of the ladder up on a stable surface – supervise closely as your child climbs up and down.

Mom and Dad’s Helper

Your toddler is old enough to help mom and dad around the house. Not only is this a great opportunity for strengthening, but it brings your child much pride and can improve self-esteem. Depending on the age of your toddler, some activities that can improve upper body strength include:

- Carrying grocery bags in from the car
- Helping to push or carry recycling box to the curb
- Shovelling snow, raking leaves, or digging in the garden
- Carrying watering cans to water outside or indoor plants
- Pulling items in a wagon when out for a short walk
- Pushing a small grocery cart
- Carrying books or any item with weight around the home – get creative!

Open & Close

A sing-a-long with actions. Have your child sit or stand in front of you to sing along and follow the actions.

Open, shut them, open, shut them
Give them a clap
Open, shut them, open shut them
Put them in your lap

Frozen Zoo

Before you begin this game go through all the different ways you can walk like an animal (see attached handout). The children can then pick their favourite animal to be. Start the music and have the children walk around the room as their chosen animal. When the music stops they must ‘Freeze’ and try and hold as long as they can.

Yoga Poses for Upper Extremity Strength and Stability * Adapted From Yoga Kit for Kids
by Imaginazium

Cat

- Start from hands and knees. Hands should be directly under shoulders, knees under hips.
- Spread fingers wide and point them straight ahead.
- Keeping arms straight, press down through hands into floor and exhale as you round back as much as possible and look at your bellybutton.
- On the inhale, arch your back, look up and reach one leg behind you. Imagine you are a cat stretching all the way through your tail.
- Repeat with the other leg stretching back.
- Do as many times as feels good.

*From all fours
I round my spine
So I can see my tummy
Then with a stretch
I arch myself
It makes my back
feel yummy.*

Dog

- Start from hands and knees.
- Hands should be directly under shoulders, knees under hips.
- Spread fingers wide and point them straight ahead. Curl toes under.
- Press down through hands and feet into floor and push hips as high up as possible.
- Let your head hang down so you can look at your legs.
- Lengthen your back and straighten your arms and legs.
- Reach heels toward the floor as you pull back and yawn just like a dog!
- Hold pose for 3-6 breaths and then lower back to hands and knees.

*I am dog
And when I yawn
I push into the ground
My tail goes up
My back gets long
My arms stretch straight
My head hangs down.*

Cobra

- Lay on floor on tummy, legs straight.
- Place palms of hands on floor close to and on either side of chest.
- Looking straight ahead, lift chest as high as possible.
- Shoulders should be wide and down away from ears.
- Then, arch and lift chest even higher by pressing down into hands.
- Keep elbows pinned into sides of body and pull chest forward and up. Neck should be long and chin parallel to floor.

*I press my hands
I lift my chest
I send a slither up my back
My shoulders wide
In kingly stance
Beware to all!
I might attack.*

Lion

- Start my kneeling on shins and resting chest onto thighs.
- Place forearms on the floor with elbows touching knees and look straight ahead.
- Be a lion in hiding, silent and still, preparing to pounce.
- When ready, spring ferociously forward onto hands and roar with mouth and eyes wide open.
- Press hands down into floor, arms straight and push chest forward. Make sure shoulders are down away from ears and that legs are extended straight out behind you.
- If not quite strong enough, adapt pose by resting hips on floor and bending elbows.

*I can hide
Silent and still
When I crouch down low
But when I pounce
I roar out loud
So everyone will know.*

Turtle

- Sit with soles of feet pressed together so that legs form a diamond shape.
- Touch elbows together in front of chest.
- Then bending forward bring elbows down toward the floor between knees.
- Slide forearms under legs and rest hands on floor palms down.
- Round over and, if possible, rest forehead on feet.
- Pull head in and down when IN your shell and reach head out and up when peeking OUT of your shell.

*I hook my arms under my knees
And rest them on the floor
I round my back to form my shell
And peek out of the door.*

Frog

- Squat with feet wide enough apart that heels can touch or are close to the ground.
- Arms come inside of knees, hands rest on floor shoulder distance apart.
- Use arms to help spread knees wide.
- Let hips drop low while back lengthens up, chest lifts and shoulders are wide.

*I am frog
I sit in squat
I wait for flies
That I can spot
Then I flick my tongue so fast
The fly is gone within a flash.*

Table

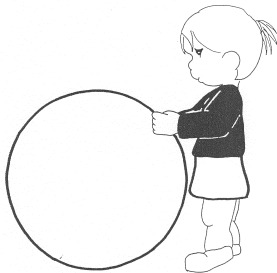
- From a seated position, place hands on floor about 6” behind you.
- Place soles of feet directly in front of hips about 8-12” in front of you.
- On an exhale, press into hands and feet and lift torso parallel to floor.
- Hands should be under shoulders and ankles should be under knees.
- Eyes can look at feet, the ceiling or back behind you depending upon what feels comfortable for your neck.
- Hold pose and breathe in and out 3-6 times before gently lowering yourself back to sitting.

*With soles and palms upon the floor
My calves and arms are legs
Off of the ground I press my seat
So you can place a vase.*

Big Ball Activities *(adapted from My Big Ball Book by Shirley Sutton)*

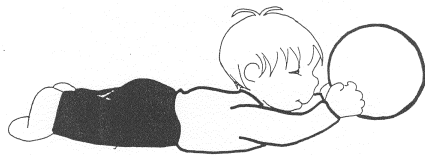
The following activities are used using a large ball, either a therapy ball or a large beach ball that you could find at your local store.

Push Big Ball



Have the child push the ball around outside. Up and down a hill. Make it a race and see who can make it across the yard first.

Lie on Tummy and Throw Ball



Have the child lie on his tummy. Using a slightly smaller ball then with the above activities play catch by rolling the ball back and forth. Or set up a target on the wall so he has to roll to hit it.

Parachute Activities

Let's Make Waves

Have the children stand around the parachute; holding it with two hands, at waist height and facing it. Have the children start by making small up-and-down hand motions that cause little ripples. Gradually, the ripples (hand and arm movements) get larger and larger until they're huge ocean waves.

Now Try This:

Have the children experiment with making waves while kneeling and sitting.

Add music to the activity and have the children make big slow waves on the slow beat and small fast waves when the beat speeds up.

The Snowstorm

Have the children stand around the parachute; holding it with two hands, at waist height and facing it. Place Styrofoam peanuts or yarn balls on the parachute. Challenge the children to move the parachute in little waves creating a "snowstorm", and working together to keep all the "flakes" from falling off the parachute. Provide a starting signal – "The snow is falling!" and a stop signal – "The sun is shining!".

Golf Ball Roll

In order to create golf ball art you will need a lid of a sturdy cardboard box, paper, 3 colours of water-based paint, 3 old golf balls, and some tape. Make sure that the lid of the cardboard box is a size that your child can hold in two hands. Line the lid with paper, using tape to hold it in place. Put a small amount of each colour of paint in a separate paper cup. Place a spoon in each cup. Ask the child to place a golf ball in each cup of paint. Have him use the spoon to stir each golf ball until it is fully covered with paint. Encourage your child to hold the cup with one hand while stirring with the other. Have the child place the paint-coated golf ball in the box lid. Encourage the child to hold the box lid with two hands and practice controlling movement of the ball. Have the child complete this activity by adding each ball, one at a time, until the child's artwork is a swirl of colours.

To make this activity harder: Place stickers in different places on the paper and have your child try to roll a golf ball to the stickers, eventually learning to stop on the sticker. By thickening the paint with glitter or powdered tempera paint, the ball will tend to roll more slowly on the paper. Encourage your child to move the box gently so the ball will roll slowly. If the child can move the ball with good control, make shapes with the golf ball.

He can make a rectangle by following the edge of the box or a circle by following the lines of a circle drawn on the paper.

Paint Your World with Water

In order to paint your world you will need paintbrushes of various sizes, a bucket with water and a tree or wall surface. Help the child fill a bucket with a small amount of water, and have him carry it to the surface to be painted by placing both hands around the handle. Demonstrate painting on the tree or wall surface with the paintbrush in one hand while holding onto the bucket with the other hand. To fully cover the bark surface, have the child dab the water between the crevices.

To make this activity harder: Have your child paint lines, shapes, letters and numbers.

One-Arm Prop – Sidelying

Have your child on the floor in a sidelying position, propped up on one forearm. Present small objects (like puzzle pieces) where the child must reach up and slightly forward with the other arm to take them. Complete the activity on once side, then ask the child to roll to the other side and prop up on the opposite forearm to reach with the other arm. Some activity suggestions: have your child reach for coins to place in a coin bank, marbles to place down a marble slide, or pegs to place in a pegboard. Remember to watch that your child doesn't sink down at the supporting shoulder. Limit the number of repetitions on each side if necessary to prevent each arm from tiring. Then switch sides more often.

Scooter Board Pull

Have your child lie on their tummies on the scooter board. Have them hold a rope or hula hoop and pull them around the room.

Body Bowling

Set up bowling pins or empty cardboard boxes at one end of the room, and have the child move across the room to knock them over.

Ways to move:

- Crawling
- Animal walks: bear, crab, seal, etc.
- On their tummies on a scooter board.

Shopping

Place play food around the room, and tell them what they need to find and get. Have the child move around the room in prone (on their tummies) on a scooter board, or with different animal walks.

Songs for Upper Extremity Strengthening

Sweetly Sings the Donkey

Sweetly sings the Donkey at the break of day (*speak quietly the first two lines*)

If you don't feed him this is what he says

!!!Eehuh, Eehuh, Eehuh!!! (*speak loudly making the donkey sounds and perform donkey kicks*)

Waves in the Sea (sung to *Wheels on the Bus*) (*perform actions with arms*)

The waves in the sea go up and down, up and down, up and down.

The waves in the sea go up and down all day long.

Continues with:

2. The shark in the sea goes snap, snap, snap...

3. The fish in the sea go swish, swish, swish...

4. The boats in the sea go toot, toot, toot...

Hands and Fingers (perform actions with arms in each line)

Up and Down

Round and round (*draw circles in the air*)

Put your fingers on the ground

Over (*hold hands above lap*)

Under (*move hands below lap*)

In between (*you've hidden your hands between your legs*)

Now my fingers can't be seen!

Hands in front

Hands behind

Now my hands I cannot find

Here's my left hand

Here's my right

Hands and Fingers back in sight (*wriggle fingers*)

Batting Beach balls

To get set up to play you will need: small beach ball, string, paper towel or wrapping paper tubes. Hang the beach ball with a piece of string from your ceiling against a wall so that it falls at the children's height. Let the child try to hit the beach ball using the "bats". Every couple of days/hits change the height of the ball.

Variations:

1. Partner Batting: Tape a line on the floor, hang the beach ball over the line, and have the children gently bat the ball back and forth to each other.
2. Hand Batting: Let a child bat a beach ball using his hands.

Under the Table

In order to create art under the table have a variety of craft supplies on hand in order for your child to create. To start tape a piece of paper to the underside of a table.

Here are some suggestions to set up for the children to do under a table:

- Lick stamps and put them on the paper
- Make pictures with Bingo dot markers
- Draw and colour pictures with crayons
- Make designs with rubber stamps and stamp pads
- Complete dot-to-dot pictures

Variation: Set up the activities listed above on a wall instead of under the table.

Stick Ball

To play the game of stick ball you will need beach balls, playground balls, sponge balls, rhythm sticks and paper towel tubes. Start by having the children lie on their stomachs in a circle on the floor. Give each child a stick and have him hold it with one hand on each end. Start the game by rolling the ball to a child. He hits the ball to a friend while keeping both hands on his stick. The children continue hitting the ball to each other, back and forth and around the circle. NOTE: Encourage the children to keep their legs straight, and their elbows off the floor. Try to hit the ball when both arms are completely extended. *Variation:* Use a different type of ball each time you play stick ball.

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