

Name:  
Date of programme:


**Occupational Therapy programme**  
**Encourage Use of the Affected Hand**

The purpose of this programme is to encourage your child to use and incorporate their affected or more affected hand in everyday activities. We hope to help your child see the benefit of using their affected hand particularly during two handed activities and initiate use of the hand faster and more often without us prompting them to do so. We are encouraging active movement of the fingers to open and close their hand for the purpose of grasp, holding and release of objects. The objects need to be of a suitable size, not too small or too large (just big enough to fit in to the whole hand) or the activities will be too challenging.

For all of the activities listed below, it is helpful to use some of the following strategies to bring your child's attention to their affected hand/side and make it more likely for them to use it for the task.

- **Vision:** Encourage your child to actively look towards the object/activity that you are asking them to engage with. Do this by:
  - o Using key words like, 'looking' or 'look at this' etc.
  - o Drawing their attention to the objects with noise or talking about it
  - o Making objects motivating and exciting/colourful
- **Physical Prompts:**
  - o Tap/rub/stroke your child's hand or arm to bring their attention to it in order to encourage them to use it for what you are asking.
  - o Help them to move their hand or arm towards the object/activity
  - o Rest a hand on your child's dominant/less affected hand if they try to use this instead of their non-dominant/more affected hand. Alternatively, hold their dominant hand in yours
- **Verbal Prompts:**
  - o Encourage your child to use their non-dominant hand by reminding them verbally to do so, i.e. "use your other hand", "other hand", "not that hand" etc.

**Activities to Try**

<p><b>Musical Instruments</b></p> <p>Encourage your child to hold a beater and beat a drum with their non-dominant hand. Have them copy rhythms you give them or encourage them to be creative on their own.</p> <p>Put some music on so your child can play along on the tambourine or shake a maraca. Be creative.</p>	
<p><b>Puzzles</b></p> <p>Have your child complete a puzzle but place the pieces of the puzzle on their affected side, making them more likely to reach with their affected hand.</p> <p>You can also have your child reach across their body to retrieve pieces – this may require the physical prompt of holding your child's dominant hand to prevent them from using this instead.</p>	

### Eating Finger Foods

If your child is very motivated by food, this activity is great to encourage them to use their affected hand to reach for the food and also practice more delicate grasps depending on what is on offer for them.

Foods such as blueberries may be harder to grasp and require a pincer grip (between thumb and fingertip) compared to a carrot stick which can be more easily picked up with the whole hand.



### Switch Toys

Switch toys are toys that are connected to and are activated by the pressing of a switch as seen in the picture.

Switch toys are useful because they do not require grasp or holding. Your child only needs to move their hand to the switch and press it to activate the toy. This can be done with a closed or open hand. Vary the position of the switch to encourage your child to move their non-dominant hand/arm in different ways.



### Stick Things to Their Clothes

Put stickers/pegs/Velcro on your child's clothes on the opposite side of the hand you want them to use. Have them reach across themselves to remove the item and put it on the table or in a container.



### Be Creative

This is not an exhaustive list of activities that you can do with your child to encourage them to use their affected hand in play. Please get creative and have fun with your child. Make sure your child is enjoying the activities and that they are not too difficult for them as we do not want them to be discouraged if they are not succeeding.



There is no limit to what you can encourage your child to do as long as you are actively working with them to use their non-dominant hand. Giving your child something to hold in their dominant hand so it is already 'occupied' is another great way to prompt them to use their non-dominant hand for whatever else you are asking them to do.

If you have any questions with regards to the type of activities or how to support your child to use their affected hand in activities, please contact Children's Occupational Therapy:

[Clcht.referrals.cypot@nhs.net](mailto:Clcht.referrals.cypot@nhs.net).

*Working in partnership with you: supporting children and young people to participate in what they need and want to do.*