

Definition

Shoulder stability refers to the ability to contract (pull together) the muscles on either side of the shoulder joint to hold the shoulder steady. This allows the arm to be held in different positions while the forearm and hand do an activity. For example, when a child climbs a ladder at a playground he is required to hold his shoulders steady while his hands grip onto the ladder rungs.

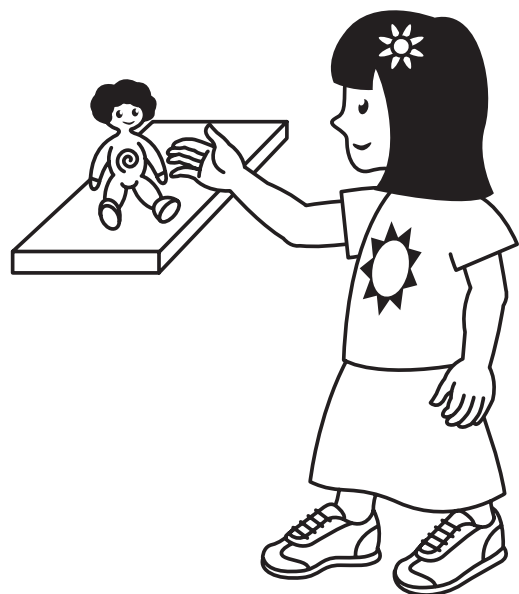
Shoulder control refers to the ability of the muscles on either side of the shoulder joint to relax gradually on one side while contracting on the other side. This allows the arm to move in a controlled and accurate way. For example, when a child reaches for a toy that is on a shelf, the muscles at his shoulder work together to ensure his arm movements are coordinated.

Shoulder stability and control is important as it enables us to place our arms and hands in a good position when we are doing different activities.

Helpful strategies

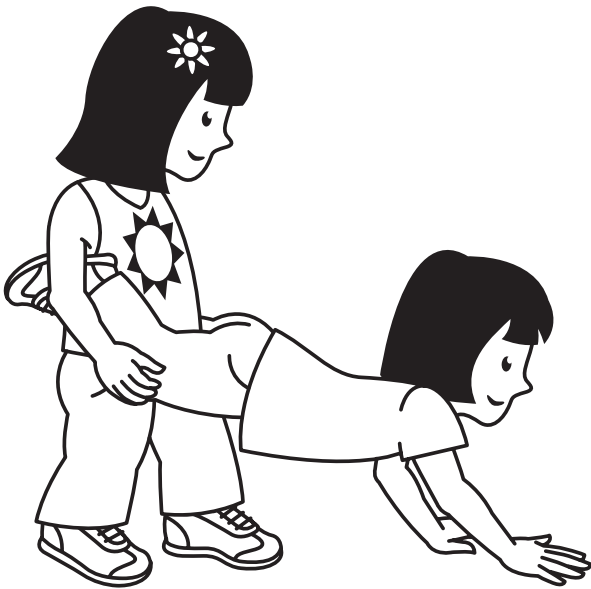
- ▶ Start with activities that promote shoulder stability, such as activities that apply pressure through the shoulder joint or that require your child to hold her shoulder joint still. For example, pushing a pram or wheelbarrow walks. These activities give your child extra sensory input and stimulate contraction of the muscles at the shoulder joint.
- ▶ Follow up with activities that require controlled movement of the shoulder joint, such as reaching for a drink that is positioned on a table, drawing at a blackboard or catching and throwing a ball.

Please talk to your occupational therapist if you have any queries about the above information.



Indoor activities

- ▶ Wheelbarrow walks – hold your child at his hips or knees while he walks on his hands (when your child is strong enough hold at his ankles). Motivate your child by encouraging him to go further each time.



- ▶ Animal walks – pretend to be a dog or cat (crawl along the floor); a bear (walk on hands and feet) or try bunny hops (jump with hands and feet). Make it fun by setting up an obstacle course, relay or race.
- ▶ Wall pushes – straighten your arms and place your open hands on the wall. Try pushing the wall over. Alternatively, try taking your nose to the wall and then pushing back again.
- ▶ Arm wrestles – sit opposite your child with elbows on the table. Hold each other's hands and encourage your child to push against your resistance.
- ▶ Play tug of war with your child using a twisted towel.
- ▶ Play with toys that provide resistance or require force such as playdough, pop beads, lego or other construction toys.
- ▶ Cooking – mixing, kneading or use a rolling pin.
- ▶ Play Twister.

Outdoor activities

- ▶ Play on playground equipment such as swings, seesaws, climbing frames and ladders or monkey bars.
- ▶ Push and pull wheelbarrows, prams or a trolley. Adjust the amount of weight to be pushed or pulled.



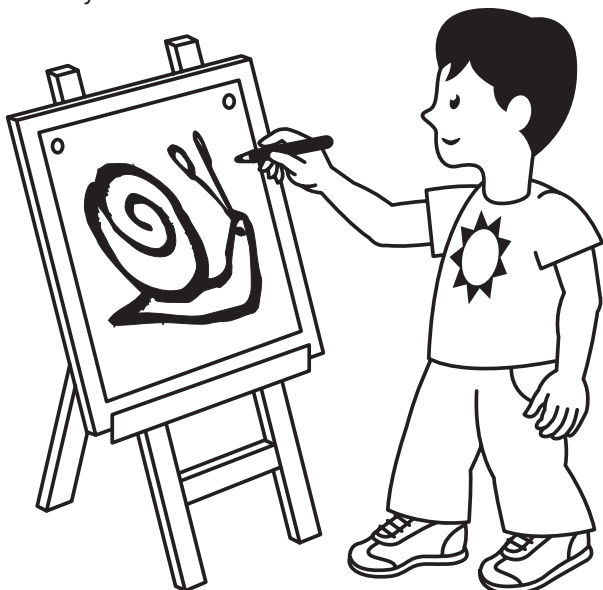
- ▶ Stand opposite your child and place the palms of your hands against your child's hands. Try pushing each other over.
- ▶ Help in the garden – dig, rake up leaves, carry soil or water in a bucket.

Please talk to your occupational therapist if you have any queries about the above information.

Encourage your child to move her arm in a smooth and controlled way when doing these activities. Start with activities at a table so that your child has something to support her arm against. Progress to activities that require your child to move her shoulder when her arms are unsupported in space.

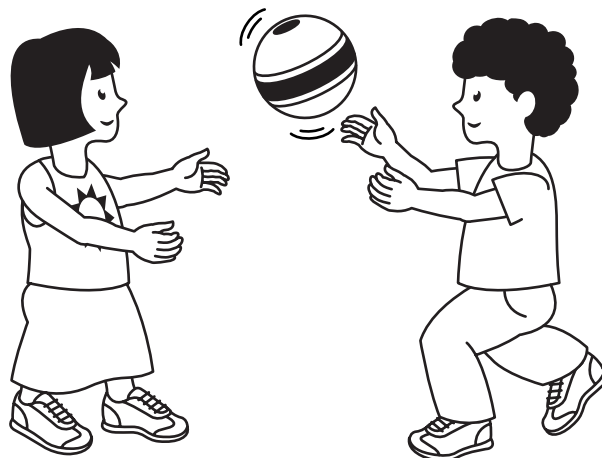
Indoor activities

- ▶ Build block towers at a table.
- ▶ Reach for food (such as sandwiches or fruit) and drink bottles when seated at a table.
- ▶ Draw, write or paint on a vertical surface such as a blackboard, easel or a piece of paper taped to a wall. Draw large vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines and large circles and patterns. To make it fun, draw an animal in a cage with vertical bars, draw a snail shell starting from the middle, a long snake, large shapes, a rainbow, play a game of noughts and crosses on a large grid, or practice writing large letters and numbers.
- ▶ Clean a blackboard using a duster.
- ▶ Play with shaving cream on a mirror or shower screen.
- ▶ Have a bath using bubble bath and rub the bubbles on a shower screen or on a tiled bathroom wall.
- ▶ Practice drawing or writing letters and numbers using large movements in the air.
- ▶ Brush your hair with a hairbrush.
- ▶ Wash your own hair.



Outdoor activities

- ▶ Paint with finger paint.
- ▶ Swim or play in water at a swimming pool.
- ▶ Pretend to paint the outside of the house or a fence using water and a large paintbrush or roller.
- ▶ Wash the car.
- ▶ Hit a suspended ball or balloon with a bat.
- ▶ Bat and ball games such as tennis, cricket or rounders.
- ▶ Other ball games such as throwing and catching a large ball, basketball or volleyball.



- ▶ Stretch up and pop bubbles blown in the air.
- ▶ Skip or turn a skipping rope for a group skipping game.
- ▶ Ribbon dancing.

Please talk to your occupational therapist if you have any queries about the above activity ideas.