

# Why Kids' Hands Aren't as *Strong* as They Used to Be

Many kids don't have sufficient hand strength to complete functional daily tasks like: grasping a pencil, cutting with scissors, and completing clothing fasteners. Sometimes hand weakness can be attributed to specific diagnoses or medical conditions, but for some kids it can be a matter of exposure.

## **1 || Infants are getting less tummy time**

When babies are on their tummies, they're doing more than just playing. When they're on their tummies, babies and kids push up on their hands to see the world around them. They shift their weight from one hand to the other as they reach and grab for their toys. And this weight bearing equals hand strengthening!

## **2 || Babies are getting less exposure to crawling**

Once babies master tummy time, they graduate to the quadruped position and eventually begin to crawl. For months (until they begin standing and walking), crawling will be their primary means of exploring and experiencing the world around them. Just think of all of the hand strengthening benefits babies are getting when they spend nearly all of their waking time crawling and bearing weight on their hands!

## **3 || Kids are exposed to more screen time than ever before**

More screen time and more time with a video game controller in hand means that kids these days aren't getting as much exposure to toys and games that include small pieces, manipulatives, and moving parts that require fine motor coordination and manipulation.

## **4 || Kids are getting less exposure to outdoor, active play than ever before**

An increase in screen time and more sedentary play has other negative effects on the development of hand strength too. When kids are spending their days in front of a video game system, tablet, or computer, it means that they're spending less time outdoors and engaged in active play experiences that build hand strength like: climbing ladders on the playground, climbing trees, crawling through tunnels, swinging from the monkey bars.

## **5 || Kids are getting less exposure to fine motor/art/craft activities**

Many families don't prioritize art and craft activities as a way to spend time with their kids because of work and other obligations or because they perceive art/craft activities as being complicated, messy, and overwhelming. Parents may not realize that kids get huge hand strengthening and fine motor benefits from activities as simple as playing with play dough or snipping paper with mom.