Developing a Hand Dominance

INTRODUCTION
Hand dominance is the preference of one hand to perform fine and gross motor tasks, such as writing, cutting or catching and throwing a ball. Typically children develop hand dominance between the age of 2 and 4 years.

The dominant hand and the non-dominant hand play a significant role in completing tasks. Both hands working together is known as bilateral coordination and is important in many school-related tasks.

Some people are good at using both hands (ambidextrous) but it is much better for a child to develop strength and dexterity in one hand as this will help them develop accuracy and speed with one hand.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?
- Ensure utensils are placed at the child’s midline (directly in front of them in the middle), and allow the child to choose and switch hands freely during activities.
- Ensure your child is sitting in a stable position, with their feet supported or standing at a vertical surface.

ACTIVITIES:
- Large scribbling on the chalkboard or drawing on mural paper that is on an easel or taped to the wall or floor.
- Pounding a large ball of play dough with one hand until it is flat – you could try this to make bread or any other dough.
- Throwing small balls or beanbags with one hand.
- Screwing lids on and off jars.
- Pushing a car or train around the floor – a track could be drawn on paper and placed on the floor. As the child has to negotiate around the track, the child has to stabilise their weight with their non-dominant hand.
- Tracing over templates or colouring in on small pieces of paper – the non-preferred hand must help by stabilising.
- Drawing with chalk outside on the pavement whilst stabilising their weight.

NHS Tayside Child Health Occupational Therapy Service

File Path: Child Health AHP/OT/Tayside/Pre-Ref.Workstream/Pre-Ref.Advice Sheets