

## Crossing Midline

By the age of 3 or 4 years old, a child should have mastered the skill called "crossing the midline". This is the ability to move one hand, foot, or eye into the space of the other hand, foot or eye. We cross midline when we scratch an elbow, cross our ankles, and read left to right. Crossing the midline of your body helps build pathways in the brain and is an important prerequisite skill required for the appropriate development of various motor and cognitive skills. Coordinating both sides of the body can be difficult for the child who avoids crossing midline. Often, these children have not yet established a hand preference, sometimes using their left and sometimes using their right to draw, color, write, eat, and throw.

Children who have difficulty crossing the body's midline often have trouble with skills such as reading, writing, completing self-care skills and participating in sports & physical activities.

### **Activities to help develop the ability to Cross the Midline:**

- Play flashlight tag: In a dimmed room, lay on your backs and have the child follow your flashlight beam on the wall with his own flashlight.
- Child can sit back-to-back with parent or friend, passing a ball to each other using both hands.
- Pop bubbles with only one hand (they will have to reach across their body to pop the bubbles floating on the opposite side).
- When your child is in the tub give them an opportunity to wash their arms and legs, this will promote crossing their midline too.
- Pick-up games: Place objects to the child's right and a container on his left side, so that he must reach across midline to drop objects into the container. Put your hand in front of the child's non-dominant hand, as needed, to block him from using it to reach for objects. Here are some ideas of object that can be picked up: pom poms, pennies, paper clips, marbles, blocks and pegs (they can be made inexpensively by cutting them from a thin dowel). Try using a yogurt container with a hole cut in the lid to size for the object used. Yogurt containers are a nice size for the children to hold.
- Sitting long-leg with back against the wall, using tongs to pick up objects from one side of his body to the other side, placing it in a bucket.
- Put stickers on arms and legs and ask child to get them using their opposite arm.



- Side sitting with weight supported on the non-dominant hand when playing memory game, building puzzles, playing with blocks etc.



**Watch for the following habits kids do to avoid crossing their midline:**

1. Switching objects, crayons, utensils etc. between hands.
2. Moving the paper or placing the paper always on one side of their bodies.
3. Leaning with their body to one side to avoid crossing their midline.

**If you have any questions regarding crossing midline, please contact an Occupational Therapist at the CDC.**