**Crossing the Midline – Information and Activities**

**What is crossing the body's midline?**

Crossing the body midline (an imaginary line down the center of the body) is the ability to reach across the middle of the body with the arms and legs crossing over to the opposite side (e.g. being able to draw a horizontal line across a page without having to switch hands in the middle or sitting cross-legged on the floor).

**Why is crossing the body's midline important?**

Crossing the body midline is an important developmental skill needed for many everyday tasks such as writing, reaching towards your foot to put on a shoe and sock with both hands and hitting a ball with a bat. When your child spontaneously crosses the midline with the dominant hand, then the dominant hand is going to get the practice that it needs to develop good fine motor skills. If your child avoids crossing the midline, then both hands will tend to get equal practice at developing skills and your child’s true handedness may be delayed. This means that once a child starts school, learning to write will be much more difficult as they will have two less skilled hands rather than one stronger, more skilled hand. Difficulty crossing the midline also makes it difficult to track a moving object from one side to the other or track from left to right when reading, meaning reading can also be delayed.

**You can tell there are problems with crossing the body's midline if the child:**

* Switches hands when writing, drawing, painting and coloring.
* Uses left hand for activities on the left side of the body and right hand for activities on the right hand side.
* Rotates their trunk to the opposite side when reaching across the body.
* Has difficulty tracking an object from one side of the body to the other.
* Has poor reading skills.
* Has poor pencil skills.
* Uses different feet to kick a ball.
* Has difficulty coordinating gross motor patterns (e.g. crawling, skipping, star-jumps).

**When you see difficulties with crossing the body's midline, you might also see difficulties with:**

* Pencil based activities – a child may avoid these activities.
* Behavior – a child may become angry or frustrated when engaging in fine motor activities due to less refined hand skills.
* Performing self-care tasks independently (age influenced).
* Coordinating both sides of the body.
* Reading
* Noticing all of the details on a page when copying drawings or writing.

**Retrieved from** [**http://www.childdevelopment.com.au/sound-awareness/130**](http://www.childdevelopment.com.au/sound-awareness/130)

**Crossing the Midline Activities**

* Play cars on a large path – draw a line on a large piece of paper or make a large path on the floor with blocks for children to drive their toy cars. Put lots of turns in the path. Encourage children to just use one hand to drive the car.
* Use large (adult size) paint brushes and/or rollers and let your child paint the sides of the center. Encourage using one hand at a time.
* Wash the tables and chairs – Encourage your child to use his/her dominant hand and reach in all directions.
* Practice windmills or cross crawls (hand to opposite foot or hand to opposite knee).
* Wipe the table with one hand (put a light coat of shaving cream all over the table and have your child wipe it off with a wet cloth).
* Draw a large figure eight (the number eight facing side to side, not top to bottom) with chalk and have children walk the figure eight OR draw the infinity sign and have children trace it with their finger of their dominant hand
* Thread beads, cutting and pasting, folding paper.
* Place finger puppets on one hand and encouraging children to remove the puppets with the opposite hand.
* Using instruments, allow children to bang them together in their midline.
* Play a game like Twister
* Play Simon Says
* Streamer or ribbon circles and patterns in front of their midline (use two hands together or one in each hand).
* Marching games using their arms and legs.
* Place stickers on one arm and encourage children to remove them with the opposite hand.