

LET'S WORK ON STRENGTH (at home!)

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The great thing about most of these activities is they will not only help your child strengthen their shoulders and core but will also be targeting a lot of other areas such as fine motor skills, coordination, motor planning, and balance— to name a few!

Using a Couch Cushion to Work on Strength

In an OT session we might use a wedge, bolster or therapy ball but you guys are at home so one very useful tool is a **couch cushion!**

On Their Belly:

Have the child lay on their belly over the edge of the cushion to play a game, read a book, or do a puzzle— this positions them to weight bear into their arms as well as requires them to lift their head.

The child may drop their head, which may indicate that they need a break and that is OK!

If this seems too easy, put items elevated slightly so they have to lean into one arm and reach with the other!

Some kids may be resistant to this position, but if they love to be held, try placing them over your legs on their belly so they are leaning into their elbows or arms while playing/reading.

Sitting:

Another way to use the couch cushion is to sit on the cushion, providing an unstable surface, working on balance — this can be done while watching tv, coloring, reading etc.

To make it more of a challenge add a smaller pillow under the couch cushion, but make sure you are supervising your child!

Crawling, Jumping, PLAYING:

If your child has difficulty attending to a seated task, **climbing over the cushions, jumping on the cushions, picking them up and pushing them over, and crawling across them**, will all require them to use their muscles.

Create an **obstacle course**: crawling over the cushions, crawling under a chair, jumping over blocks, following a path made out of books/toys, or make a line out of tape, etc.

Watch for “W-sitting”

This is an indicator of decreased postural control and strength. If you notice your child sitting in this position try to redirect them to a criss-cross position, playing at an elevated surface while kneeling, or sitting elevated on a pillow (similar to an adult sitting on a yoga block as a modification in yoga).

Make it more challenging!

One more way to make the weight bearing tasks more challenging is to work on **wheelbarrow walking**— you can support at the hips, above the knees, the shins, or the ankles!

Wheelbarrow walk to one side of the room, get a puzzle piece, crayon, or game piece, and do a silly animal walk (frog, bear, dog, penguin, snake, etc.) back to where you started.

If wheelbarrow walks are too challenging start with them crawling across the floor.

Body Language

Some kids may not be able to express if they are tired, so watch their body language. If they aren't doing something it may mean it is too challenging, so don't get frustrated if they aren't laying on the cushion, or doing something exactly the way it is set up.

The most important thing for a child is to PLAY!! That's what kids do best-- so channel your inner child and have some fun!

