

WHY KIDS' HANDS AREN'T AS STRONG AS THEY USED TO BE

1 || Infants are getting less tummy time

These days, babies spend a lot of their time in carriers, car seats, and strollers. When babies are on their tummies (prone position), they're doing more than just playing. This position provides infants (and big kids) with important motor, sensory, and strengthening input, including weight bearing in the hands. 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! Less time spent in the prone position means that babies are getting less exposure to important hand strengthening opportunities when they're young.

2 || Babies are getting less exposure to crawling

Once babies master tummy time, they graduate to the quadruped position (all fours) and eventually begin to crawl. 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. Think Legos, Trouble, or card games.

4 || Kids are getting less exposure to outdoor, active play

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. Just think of all of the important hand strengthening opportunities kids get when they're running around with their friends outside – climbing ladders on the playground, climbing trees, crawling through tunnels, swinging from the monkey bars. All things kids are missing out on when they're spending the afternoon inside playing video games.

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

Many families don't know that early experiences with and exposure to scissors, crayons, and pencils truly impact the development of kids' hand strength and their ability to use these tools in a more refined way as they get older – for handwriting, cut and paste worksheets, etc.

Finally, kids who have weak hands and fingers tend to be the ones who avoid or flat out refuse to participate in fine motor activities and games because these activities are challenging, tiring, and frustrating. This can become a vicious cycle as the child experiences less and less exposure to the very activities he or she needs in order to build strong hand muscles.