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# activities for children with ADHD

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10 calming and regulating activities for children with ADHD

## 10 calming and regulating activities for children with ADHD

Physical exercise has been proven to be hugely helpful for children with ADHD, boosting mood and brain function. Movement can also be calming through activities that provide strong proprioceptive input to help regulate our child's sensory system.

Different children will benefit from undertaking proprioceptive activities at different times. Some children with ADHD will need a burst of physical activity regularly throughout the day. Others will benefit from a movement break when they are bored or have lost interest or focus on tasks that need their attention and focus.

Having a physical task to do before a particular occasion can also be helpful for our child, mainly if it's something they struggle with: for example, before sitting at the table for a meal, getting dressed, or waiting for others.



On this page, we share ten fun regulating activities we can try with our children at home. Some are more obviously physical, while others are done seated and focus on using the muscles in the arms and the hands. If our child has difficulty with sitting (as many children with ADHD do), one of our [fidget fixers](#) may help.

**Not sure if these activities suit your child? [Click here for more resources.](#)**

### — [How to prepare your child for these exercises](#)

- Before trying these exercises, take a minute to prepare your child. To wake up their muscles, squeeze their hands, tips of their fingers and their arms and shoulders. You could also use a brush along their skin, or a vibrating massager. All of these can help to make your child more aware of their body which can then help them be more accurate and effective in their movements.
- If your child has any tightness in their arm or hands, give them a good stretch before these activities to enable them to be as successful as possible.
- Remember to praise the effort undertaken rather than the result achieved. This motivates the child to keep putting in effort and not be put off if they don't succeed at first.

## Fun Shoulder and Elbow Strengthening Exercises

## — 1. Hands and Knees Superman

This exercise works well coupled with a focus on breathing control. Perhaps suggest holding each posture for five slow breaths. Some children respond to being competitive, by holding a pose for a specific period of time.



1. On hands and knees: reach one arm straight out in front in the air, like Superman! You can challenge the child to balance a beanbag or soft toy on the back of their hand to keep it up. Try and hold for one minute.
2. Put arm down and lift one leg up straight out behind. Try and hold this for one minute.
3. See if your child can hold an opposite arm and leg out at the same time and hold it for one minute? This will challenge their shoulder, elbow and hand stability muscles.
4. Try the other side.

## + 2. Wheelbarrow

## + 3. Climbing

# Wrist, Hand and Arm Strengthening Activities

## — 4. Salt Dough

1. See this '[Our Home](#)' video on hand strengthening with playdough – kneading, pulling apart, squashing or wringing the playdough can all be great hand strengthening exercises.
2. There is commercially available therapy putty with graded resistance which many children enjoy playing with. As a general guide, red/ medium soft is good for primary school children with green and blue being more resistive for older or stronger children.
3. For added novelty, try hiding objects in the dough and your child has to manipulate it to get the toy.
4. Many children find the repetitive kneading and pulling of resistive materials calming and relaxing when feeling irritable.
5. We have different adaptations on our [YouTube channel](#) including [salt dough in a plastic bag](#) for those who are hypersensitive to touch and [sensory dough recipes](#).

#### **+ [5. Clothes Pegs](#)**

#### **+ [6. Tongs](#)**

#### **+ [7. Nuts and Bolts](#)**

#### **+ [8. Paper scrunching](#)**

#### **+ [9. Squeezing Games](#)**

Here are a selection of suitable videos

Our Home: Salt dough for fine a...



Salt Dough

How to make juggling balls - suit...



Make your Own  
Stress Balls

Our Home - Scavenger Hunt



Scavenger Hunt

How to make a paper Minecraft ...



Make a Minecraft  
person

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