

Crossing the Body's Midline

What is crossing the body's midline?

Why is crossing the body's midline important?

Building blocks necessary to develop the ability to cross the body's midline include:

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

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

What can be done to improve the ability to cross the body's midline?

Activities that can help improve crossing the body's midline include:

Why should you seek therapy if you notice difficulties with crossing the body's midline?

Left untreated, difficulties with crossing the body's midline can lead to:

What type of therapy is recommended for difficulties with crossing the body's midline?

If you are concerned about difficulties with crossing the body's midline, the next step is:

Other relevant resources:

What is crossing the body's midline?

Crossing the body's midline (an imaginary line down the centre 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's 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.

Building blocks necessary to develop the ability to cross the body's midline include:

- Bilateral integration skills (using both sides of the body at the same time).
- Core stability and trunk rotation
- Hand dominance
- Planning and sequencing
- Body awareness

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

- Switches hands when writing, drawing, painting and colouring.
- 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.
- Behaviour – 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.

What can be done to improve the ability to cross the body's midline?

- **Bilateral Integration Skills** (using both sides of the body at the same time).
- **Daily Life Skills:** Incorporate some [midline crossing activities](#) into your daily life.
- **Core Stability:** Work on core stability and trunk rotation.

Activities that can help improve crossing the body's midline include:

- **Craft:** Threading beads, cutting and pasting, folding paper.
- **Finger Puppets:** Placing finger puppets on one hand and encouraging your child to remove the puppets with the opposite hand.
- **Blocks and Percussion:** Getting your child to bang blocks or percussion instruments together in their midline.
- **Twister:** Playing Twister
- **Simon Says:** Playing Simon Says
- **Streamers:** Getting your child to make 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.
- **Stickers:** Placing stickers on one arm and encouraging your child to remove them with the opposite hand.

Why should you seek therapy if you notice difficulties with crossing the body's midline?

- To help a child develop hand dominance.
- To help prepare a child for the transition into the academic environment where many pencil skill and fine motor tasks are expected.
- To help a child to complete many self care tasks.
- To help a child improve their gross motor skills such as kicking, hitting balls and running.
- To help improve the ability to track effectively across a page so that reading is more fluent.

Left untreated, difficulties with crossing the body's midline can lead to:

- Increased pressure and anxiety in a school aged child as it is expected that most self care skills are independent or requiring only minimal assistance.
- Difficulties keeping up in class due to poor handwriting skills.
- Difficulties completing job applications or rental applications as handwriting may not be neat and easy to read.
- Difficulties participating in sports that require good coordination (e.g. basketball, baseball, netball, tennis).

What type of therapy is recommended for difficulties with crossing the body's midline?

If your child has difficulties crossing the body's midline, it is recommended they consult an Occupational Therapist.

If you are concerned about difficulties with crossing the body's midline, the next step is:

- Call Kid Sense for an obligation-free discussion with a paediatric professional on ph 1300 66 00 67.
- Take the free on-line Self Assessment to obtain a visual representation of how your child is developing (doing this in conjunction with your teacher can be really helpful too).
- Visit the Child Development *Ages and Stages* Charts and Checklists to see what skills are expected at your child's age.
- Go to Booking an Appointment for more information.
- Review the fact sheets below for more relevant information.

Other relevant resources:

- Hand control (fact sheet)
- Manipulation (fact sheet)
- School readiness (fact sheet)
- Gross motor (fact sheet)