



Developing Fine Motor Skills After Breast Cancer

Contributions from Amanda Peterson, PT, DPT, CLT

What are fine motor skills?

A fine motor skill, or dexterity, is the coordinated skill and ease in using the hands to perform manual tasks.

How can breast cancer affect fine motor skills?

A common side effect of chemotherapy is chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN), which results in numbness, tingling, and weakness in the hands and feet.

Another possible side effect of chemotherapy can be increased joint pain that could affect finger and hand mobility.

Examples of Fine Motor Skills:

- ▲ Buttoning a shirt
- ▲ Opening a jar
- ▲ Opening a bag of chips
- ▲ Chopping vegetables
- ▲ Zipping up a jacket
- ▲ Tying shoes
- ▲ Squeezing toothpaste
- ▲ Writing

Exercises for Developing Fine Motor Skills:

- ▲ Placing clothes pins on a yard stick
- ▲ Shuffling, dealing, and flipping cards
- ▲ Picking up jelly beans
- ▲ Playing the piano
- ▲ Opening jars/bottles
- ▲ Sewing

How does pumpkin carving develop fine motor skills?

- ▲ Holding a marker to draw the pattern you will be carving
- ▲ Holding and manipulating a knife to carve the pumpkin
- ▲ Gripping the stem of the pumpkin to pull the top off
- ▲ Cleaning out the inside of the pumpkin with your hands or holding a spoon
- ▲ Washing the pumpkin seeds to cook! Yummy!