

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD?

If you think your child is having trouble crossing midline, an occupational therapist can help them develop this skill. However, there are many ways that you can incorporate crossing midline at home as well. During these activities, try to watch for their upper body moving with their arms. To help with crossing midline, their upper body needs to stay straight and not rotate.

- Crafts: threading beads, drawing long lines, cutting
- Twister
- Swinging a bat such as baseball/tee ball
- Throwing, rolling, kicking a ball at targets to the right and left
- Simon Says: "Touch your left knee with your right hand"
- Patty Cake
- Balloon Volleyball: Hit the balloon only using one hand
- Puzzles: Put the pieces where your child will have to reach for them
- Card Matching: Spread out the cards and only use one hand to pick them up.



**MARIAN HOPE**  
CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S THERAPY

**14820 E. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street S**  
**Independence, MO 64055**

**Phone: (816) 695-1255**  
**Fax: (816) 478-7762**  
**Email: [info@marianhope.org](mailto:info@marianhope.org)**  
**Web: [www.marianhope.org](http://www.marianhope.org)**

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**Developed By**  
*Angela Gerstenkorn, OTS*  
*with supervision by*  
*Emma M. Tosatto, MBA, MOTR/L*

# Your Child and Crossing Midline



**AN IMPORTANT  
DEVELOPMENTAL SKILL**

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## WHAT IS CROSSING MIDLINE?



As a child grows, they develop skills, which will help them in daily activities, school tasks, and general motor abilities. Reflexes they had when they were infants start to fade, and they develop more control of their body. As they explore their environment, they gain strength and improve their ability to move. Children begin to learn **bilateral coordination**; that is, the ability to use both sides of their body in an organized manner.

- **Symmetrical:** Both sides of the body complete the same activity at the same time, such as clapping their hands.
- **Asymmetrical:** Both sides of the body work to do different actions for the same task, such as cutting with one hand and turning the paper with the other.
- **Reciprocal:** Both sides of the body work in opposite directions, such as crawling (creeping) on arms and legs (*typically 7-11 months*).
- **Crossing Midline:** The ability for a person to reach across the middle of the body. The arm and/or leg and/or eye (gaze) crossing over to the opposite side (*typically 3 or 4 years old*).

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The ability to cross midline is critical when trying to complete everyday tasks such as dressing and eating. Difficulty with this skill often becomes more apparent once a child reaches school age.

A child will, often times, have not chosen a dominant hand yet. Rather, they will use both hands somewhat equally depending on what side of the body the task is on. If it is on their left side, they will use their left hand and vice versa. In this case, they become mediocre with both hands rather than skilled with one. This can cause difficulty with handwriting, cutting, coloring and so on.

The act of crossing midline is not only important to be able to physically complete tasks, but it also is important for brain development. Reciprocal movements, such as crawling, as well as crossing midline, create connections in brain by requiring the right and left sides of the brain to “talk” to each other. For coordinated movements, the two sides of the brain must work together. This involves an increase in pathways between the two sides of the brain. This increase in communication in the brain improves overall movement coordination, cognition, speech, and many more aspects. Therefore, the practice and use of this skill is critical in other aspects of development.

## WHAT SIGNS MIGHT YOU SEE?

If you are worried that your child is having difficulty crossing midline, there are a few common adaptations your child may make to accomplish their tasks. Do you observe any of the following?

- Switching hands when writing, coloring
- Moving paper to the dominant side if they have a preferred hand when writing
- Picking up items on the side they are placed and then switches hands to transfer to the other side
- Rotating upper body to the opposite side when reaching across it
- Difficulty reading or looking by rotating/moving the book or their head
- Difficulty tracking an object from one side to the other
- Uses different feet to kick a ball
- Trouble coordinating large movements such as crawling and skipping
- Difficulty with ADL’s (dressing, brushing teeth, eating)

