

## *Focus on Catching, Throwing & Kicking*

Ball games are an important part of New Zealand society; many NZ youngsters are given balls early, as their parent's dream of the next Michaela Blyde (Black Ferns 7's) or Trent Bolt (Black caps). However, under the age of two, a child generally has not developed the skilled hand/foot-eye coordination required to successfully manipulate a ball.



### ***What is hand eye/foot coordination?***

Hand-eye coordination is the ability of the vision system to coordinate the information received through the eyes to control, guide and direct the hands to accomplish a task such as writing or catching a ball. Hand eye coordination uses the eyes to direct attention and the hands to execute a task. The same could be said for foot eye coordination.

It is important we expose children to many different activities that will help develop these specific skills. Using their feet/hands and eyes are an important part of a child's development

Catching, throwing and kicking are skills necessary for sports skills but also necessary for writing (hand and eye need to work together) reading, rhythm and timing and crossing the road! (ability to judge speed and direction)

Ball handling skills also develop an awareness of preferred hand and foot.

### *Practical ideas for developing eye/hand/foot coordination*

- Lie baby on his tummy and roll a toy in front of his eyes, across and toward and away – not only encourages eye movements but also upper body strength
- Use finger puppets, play finger games like ‘two little dicky birds’
- Give children sticks or rulers and ask them to catch bubbles on them
- Use balloons and fly swats; hit the balloon up and down
- Play skittles
- Place a ball in a bag and hang it from a hook – use a football for kicking practise or a smaller ball for hitting. You can also use it as a wrecking ball with skittles!
- Feathers are great; allow them to fall down over your baby or older children can throw them up in the air (hands, on head, on foot)
- Use paper plates and ping pong balls. Paper plates make great bats and ping pong balls don’t damage anything indoors. Great for a game of table hockey!

