

Personal Care Tips

The current confinement situation may offer an opportunity to prioritise personal care goals for your child. Facilitating a child or young person's engagement in tasks such as hair washing, nail cutting and toothbrushing requires a consistent approach over a period of time, and so this may be an area on which you can now focus.

Before commencing any personal care task, ensure your child is in an emotionally ready state. Encourage them to engage in a calming activity beforehand e.g. deep pressure input or listening to favourite music. Try to create a calming atmosphere by dimming lights and reducing noise.

Hair cutting



Calm Clippers

- Calm clippers are a useful alternative to standard scissors. They allow you to cut hair at different stages so you cut little and often. The child's hair is presentable rather than using standard scissors. Widely available online.
- A visual timer may be useful so your child can see how long you will be spending on the activity.
- A distractor, such as a puzzle, drawing or iPad may also be helpful.

Hair brushing



Tangle Teaser

- Before brushing massage the head/scalp slowly and with deep input to decrease sensitivity.
- Have your child brush their hair with a mirror so they can see themselves brushing. This gives them visual feedback and can give them a better sense of control.
- Use a visual support to clarify how long they need to brush their hair. It may be a visual timer, or a visual prompt to indicate how many strokes of the hair brush they have to use and then they are finished. Some children may respond well to brushing their hair for the duration of a favourite Nursery rhyme or song.
- Practice hair brushing on mum, dad or a sibling
- A tangle teaser or wet brush with conditioner detangle spray will be easier for your child to tolerate.

Hair washing

- Lather the shampoo into your child's head using deep pressure as this is likely to be more tolerable.
- Use a visual support to show them how many times you will rinse their hair using a jug (or similar), or use a timer to show them how long you will use the shower head.
- Encourage your child to wash their own hair as this gives them control over the input and it then becomes predictable.
- Children with sensitivity to smells will prefer perfume-free shampoos.

Nail cutting



Glass file

- Try a nail file- it may take longer but your child may tolerate it better. Glass files leave a smoother edge and are much quicker.
- Before nail cutting, ask if your child wants to squeeze putty, play-dough, or a stress-ball. The heavy work/deep pressure input might help to reduce your child's tactile sensitivity.
- Having your child hold a vibrating toy in his/her hands prior to or during nail clipping might help. The vibration may help desensitise the area.
- Consider cutting nails after bath-time when the nails are the softest (this can make them easier to cut).
- Press down gently on the centre of each nail prior to clipping. This might help reduce the sensitivity.
- Use a visual support to indicate how many nails will be cut. It may be more tolerable for your child to only cut one nail each day, and then gradually increase over time.

Toothbrushing



Three sided toothbrush

- Three sided toothbrushes (eg, Dr Barman's Superbrush) will cut down time required as it brushes all three sides of the teeth at once. These are widely available online.
- Other modified toothbrushes include 360 degree toothbrushes, U-shaped toothbrushes and musical toothbrushes.
- Children with smell and taste sensitivities may prefer unflavoured toothpaste.

Showering

- Children and young people with tactile sensitivities dislike the light pressure of water from a shower. They will probably prefer a to have a bath or to wash at a basin.
- A body brush or loofah will provide deeper pressure than a sponge, and so may be preferable for some.
- Children and young people with sensitivity to smell will prefer perfume-free soaps and shower gels.
- Provide a visual support to remind them of all the body parts to be washed.