

Occupational Therapy Advice

2017



Self-care activities

Suggested strategies and activities:

- * Try using a visual schedule or Now and Next board with pictures and stages of the self-care activity that the child is completing. This can be used as a checklist for the child to ensure they have completed each step before moving on to the next.
- * Role play / pretend play may help to engage your child and increase their understanding of the importance of self-care activities.
- * Social stories can be helpful to educate your child that these activities are common to all adults and children.
- * Practice these activities in a quiet environment to maximise your child's attention.
- * Where possible, it may be helpful to perform the activity at the same time each day to establish a routine.
- * Try using a reward / star chart to motivate your child during self-care activities.

Hand washing

- * There are lots of steps associated with hand washing!
- * Your child may benefit from demonstrations or hand over hand facilitation to complete activities.
- * If your child is reluctant to place their hands under a running tap, try filling the sink or a bowl of water. It may be helpful to allow your child to have some control of the task, such as turning the tap on / off by them self.
- * If your child is sensitive to textures on their hands, try using water only and gradually introduce soap. Be creative. Try different types of soap including liquid or bar soap, and various soap colours or shapes.

Brushing teeth

- * Electric toothbrushes can be lots of fun! They are also helpful when hand and arm strength is reduced. Your child may also benefit from using a toothbrush with a thicker handle, as this will be easier to hold.
- * Hand strengthening activities may be relevant. Your therapist will discuss this with you if required.
- * Coordinating brushing teeth can be difficult for some children. Brushing teeth in front of the mirror and providing hand over hand facilitation to your child so they feel the correct movements may be helpful.
- * Brushing teeth is a very sensory experience. Some children are resistant to toothbrush bristles and / or certain textures / flavours of toothpaste. Try grading the duration of brushing and try different types of toothpaste. It may

even be helpful to try brushing without toothpaste initially. Your therapist will prescribe oral motor stimulation activities if deemed necessary.

Toileting

- * There are a lot of steps involved in toileting. Starting from identifying the need to go to the toilet through to washing your hands upon completion. Visual schedules can be very helpful for home and school, to help a child successfully complete the required sequence.
- * The physical task of wiping your bottom can be tricky! Strategies such as using wet wipes provides additional tactile feedback and can be easier to use as they are slippery and therefore require less effort to move across the skin.
- * Sometimes it's tricky to coordinate reaching behind the body. Try games positioned behind the body such as placing pegs on the back of your child's shirt for them to remove, asking them to place or access balls from bucket, or placing shower gel on your child's back or bottom for them to wipe off. You could even encourage finger / hand painting on sheets of paper stuck to the wall behind your child.

Washing and brushing hair

- * It may be helpful to provide your child with hand over hand support, so they can practice the correct movements. Encourage them to actively help and gradually increase their involvement.
- * Try providing some massage to the head prior to washing or brushing, as this can reduce the sensitivity.
- * Lots of children are reluctant to have water run over their face. Try placing a face cloth over the child's forehead and eyes. Alternatively washing hair in the bath may help.
- * If your child is sensitive to the smell of a shampoo, try different types as fragrances can vary.
- * Holding a brush and coordinating the movements required to brush hair may be difficult. Hand strengthening activities could be helpful to develop a strong grasp on the brush. You could also try using a brush with a thick handle.
- * Allow your child to practice brushing on a doll or another person.
- * There are lots of types of brush bristles, and sometimes children can display sensitivity to certain brushes. Try using a variety of different brushes and combs to find the one your child tolerates most.

If your child requires specialist equipment to assist participation in self-care activities this will be identified and recommended by your therapist.

Let us know if you have any questions!