

# Self-Help Skills



# For Everyone

## Self-Care Skills

Completing self-care tasks can be really tricky. They require motor planning and co-ordination, sequencing of steps correctly, gross and fine motor skills, and attention and concentration skills. Self-care tasks are often even more difficult for children who have difficulties with sensory input.

In this leaflet you will find some ideas and tips to try with some self-care tasks. Where possible we encourage as much independence as possible and the use of social stories, schedules and visual aids.

## Nail Cutting



- \* Use a pair of “child-friendly” nail clippers that are more visually appealing
- \* If your child struggles with nail clippers try nail scissors that have a rounded tip
- \* Some children tolerate a nail file
- \* Before nail cutting squeezing putty, play-dough, or a stress-ball can help reduce tactile sensitivity
- \* Holding a vibrating toy prior to or during nail cutting can help “desensitize” the area prior to nail clipping. Alternatively “brush” each nail with a toothbrush before cutting. A vibrating toothbrush combines both methods.
- \* Cut nails after bath-time when the nails are the softest
- \* Try not to cut the nail too short
- \* Sometimes being in control of the situation eases the sensory discomfort so can your child cut their own nails



## Dressing and Undressing



- \* Sit down to dress
- \* Use deep pressure before dressing to decrease tactile sensitivities
- \* Think about different textures
- \* Use unscented washing detergent and fabric softener
- \* Be aware of the sounds made by velcro, poppers and zips
- \* Use visual schedules to help with dressing order
- \* Add tags to zips to support independence
- \* Put half a sticker in each shoe to help put them on the correct feet
- \* Use back chain method to help develop independence



## Teeth Cleaning



- \* To decrease sensitivity apply pressure to the teeth and gums
- \* Try a different toothbrush style. If your child is very sensitive use a flannel or cloth
- \* An electric toothbrush provides consistent sensation with may be tolerated more than a manual toothbrush
- \* Use warm water instead of cold
- \* Some children prefer milder tasting toothpaste, some prefer an extra-strong flavour. There are low-froth toothpastes available
- \* Think about using a visual timer, musical cue or app
- \* Use a mirror so your child can anticipate what is happening
- \* Encourage your child to lean against the sink or sit down



## Hair Care



- \* Use a mirror so your child can anticipate what is happening
- \* Use consistent and predictable pressure in the same direction
- \* Use firm strokes
- \* Encourage your child to have a go at brushing/ combing their own hair
- \* Use lots of conditioner to detangle as much as possible/ use spray in conditioner
- \* Use unscented products
- \* Use deep pressure when washing hair
- \* If there is a knot, hold hair above the tangle to prevent pulling at head



## Hair Cuts



- \* Use a weighted blanket as a cape or use a weighted or compression vest
- \* Make touch predictable by counting down the number of times you comb through hair/ number of snips
- \* Use hair dryer to blow away bits of cut hair
- \* Dim lights if salon is too bright
- \* Try using ear buds and listen to music to drown out the noise of the salon/ clippers
- \* If your child is sensitive to smells create a smelling kit of coffee/ mint or citrus. Or have some favourite foods available
- \* Wash hair at home to reduce time in salon
- \* Book appointment at salon quiet times—early or late
- \* Try a mobile stylist
- \* Have a reward after

