

Daily care activities

Sensory processing challenges may lead to difficulties being independent in daily life skills. The following strategies may help in personal tasks.

Dressing

- Use comfortable clothes; consider type of fabric and length of sleeves.
- If the young person cannot tolerate labels, cut them out.
- If the young person cannot tolerate seams, undergarments can be worn to reduce friction.
- Try washing and drying clothes in unscented products.
- Dressing can be done in front of a mirror so as to provide visual cues to assist with sequencing, motor planning and body awareness.
- Be aware of other visual or auditory noises in the room which may be off-putting.

Personal Hygiene

- Use non-perfumed soap
- Be aware of bathroom lighting levels and minimise any noises, e.g. run the bath prior to entering the bathroom
- Use pressure when shampooing or drying with a towel
- Before bath time, do activities that involve proprioception activities as detailed previously.
- Make the transition from undressing and getting into the bath as quickly and smoothly as possible
- If the young person dislikes having their face or body washed, encourage them to wash themselves. Self-initiated touch produces a less defensive reaction
- If the young person is showering, use a hand held shower nozzle. Let the young person control the direction and force of the water
- Use a large towel, and quickly and firmly wrap the young person in it. Avoid exposure of the wet skin to the air as the light touch may trigger a defensive reaction
- Provide deep-touch using a towel to the head, hands and feet to decrease defensiveness. If they will tolerate it, provide a firm massage, using lotion to avoid skin irritation

Hair care

- Seat the young person firmly on your knee and squeeze the young person firmly between your knees (deep pressure)
- Count or have the young person count as you comb, wash, rinse or cut the hair.
- Give definite time limits to the task e.g. let's count to 10, and then we will stop cutting your hair, provide deep pressure immediately after
- Break the task into small steps and eliminate any unnecessary steps or stages. Practise each step in isolation in a stress-free environment
- Gradually combine these steps and perform the task in the natural environment. Practise without scissors, lifting up sections of hair and tugging very slightly to mimic the feel of cutting

General

Some non-sensory strategies can also help:

- Where the choice is available, allow the young person to choose a bath or a shower. A larger showerhead is often more acceptable to the young person, as it distributes the water more evenly
- Try to incorporate bathing into a play activity e.g. use floating toys and bubbles and/or coloured floating soap
- Visual aids can be used in order to help the young person understand the activity.