

Self-Care/ Dressing

Suggestions to support your child and reduce caregiver burden when completing self-care and dressing activities.

General Tips

- Pay attention to the following components of self-care tasks:
 - Sounds
 - Smells
 - Sights
 - Tastes
 - Textures
 - Temperature
 - Movements
 - Amount of steps
 - Types of instructions
- These factors can all impact the participation and success of a child's self-care activities. Use your knowledge of your child and the requirements of the task to determine what supports or modifications your child may need. Remember, children with autism and children with sensory processing difficulties may struggle to cope with the same components of a task that we often don't even notice.

Hand Washing

- Adjust the temperature of the water
 - If they struggle with hand washing, one factor could be the temperature. Children who have difficulty processing sensory information can be easily overwhelmed by changes in temperature.
- Use a visual guide for the steps involved in handwashing: wet, lather, scrub, rinse, dry. You can create a chart and mark each step with a picture.
 - This can help provide structure along with visuals, which can help improve your child's attention and understanding of the task. Creating

a routine may help this activity become easier

- Talk to your child's BA or OT for guidance or help with visual schedules!
- Use a different type of soap
 - Sometimes, soaps that are strongly scented may make handwashing difficult for children who have difficulty processing smells. If your child struggles with handwashing and may be sensitive to smell, try using an unscented hand soap.

Dressing

- Use loose, comfortable clothing when practicing independent dressing skills
 - These types of clothing can help make dressing easier when your child is first learning.
- Try different types or textures of clothing
 - Depending on your child's needs, clothing materials may greatly impact how well they tolerate dressing. Here are some links to sensory-friendly clothing:
 - Sens-ational You: https://shopsenseationalyou.com/?srsltid=AfmBOool_2Q_nlGSnXCXJIRbQi_GcPAPQPjnHnQ3hONzw5DORejTDji
 - No Limbits: https://no-limbits.com/collections/sensory-friendly?srsltid=AfmBOors9d50bPwIJ52HMJlwnn1dC_NGN08aeo16VXc7AcFZ94zLBBIr
- Break dressing down into small steps (e.g., socks first, then shirt, etc.).
- Use a mirror for visual feedback
 - Visual feedback can help your child with carrying out the proper motor skills for dressing
- Adaptive Bra
 - Using an adaptive front closure bra is one way to help improve independence in dressing for girls as they start wearing bras. Here is an example from Amazon: [Front Closure Bra](#)
- Elastic shoe laces
 - Using [Elastic Shoe Laces](#), such as the ones linked from Amazon, can

improve independence when putting on footwear by limiting the need to tie and untie shoes

Toileting

- Use a visual timer to remind your child when it's time to go to the bathroom.
 - Visual timers can help with more difficult transitions
- Positive reinforcement (stickers, praise) can encourage consistency.
 - Provide reinforcement directly after the task and try using specific praise, such as "I love how you sat on the potty," for each step of the task as necessary.
- Try using an adaptive toilet seat
 - If your child struggles more with the sensory components of toileting, maybe a [Cushioned Toilet Seat](#) will help your child tolerate the temperature and texture of the seat.
 - If your child struggles more with the motor components of the task, or has a fear of sitting on the toilet, you may try a [Raised Toilet Seat with Handles](#).
- Have your child use a toilet buddy and/ or gloves when wiping
 - If your child has difficulty with wiping and seems to be sensitive to mess or textures, try giving them disposable gloves or using a [Toilet Buddy](#) to help hold the toilet paper.

Bathing

- Adjust water temperature
 - Children may be more sensitive to different temperatures, so it is important to adjust to their needs accordingly
- Use a handheld shower
 - Using a handheld shower can help provide more control to where the water is hitting the body. This can also be helpful when children are sensitive to water in their eyes
- Use a different type of soap
 - Sometimes, soaps that are strongly scented may make bathing difficult

or uncomfortable for children who have difficulty processing smells. If your child struggles with bathing and may be sensitive to smell, try using an unscented hand soap.

- Play background music
 - This can help make bathtime fun, but can also help regulate your child, or help if they are sensitive to the sound of running water.

Teeth brushing

- Use a different type of toothbrush
 - Try different types of toothbrushes such as a vibrating one or one with softer bristles. This may help your child better tolerate the feeling of the brush on their gums.
- Incorporate music
 - This can not only help make toothbrushing fun, but can also help your child remain regulated and focused during tooth brushing
- Use a visual guide for the steps involved in toothbrushing. You can create a chart and mark each step with a picture.
 - This can help provide structure along with visuals, which can help improve your child's attention and understanding of the task. Creating a routine may help this activity become easier.
 - Talk to your child's BA or OT for guidance or help with visual schedules!
- Use a visual timer for each quadrant of the mouth
 - This may help break toothbrushing down into smaller tasks and can help your child with duration and transitions between the steps of brushing their teeth.

Fixing hair

- Placing weighted materials in your child's lap may help with sitting still
 - This can be regulating for your child, but should not be forced if it makes the child uncomfortable, as this can make your problem worse
- Engage in a heavy motor activity, such as jumping, before sitting still to fix hair
 - If your child struggles with sitting still, another option is to engage in

heavy work before they sit. This can help release energy and help them regulate before they need to tolerate getting their hair fixed.

- Incorporate music
 - This can not only help as a distraction, but can also help your child remain regulated while fixing their hair