

SELF-CARE SKILLS

Daily self-care activities can include dressing, toileting, feeding, dental hygiene and bathing. As a child grows it is important that they begin to develop independence in these tasks. It is important to remember that the development of a child's fine and gross motor skills contributes to independence in self-care tasks. For example in order to fasten a button a child needs to be able to use a pinch grasp. Please refer to the fine and gross motor handouts for tips on how to develop these skills.

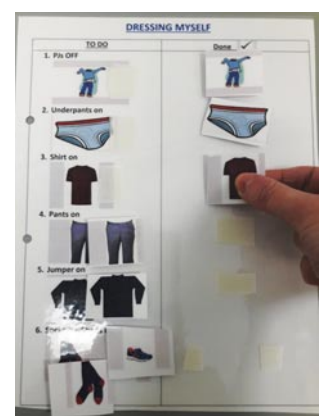
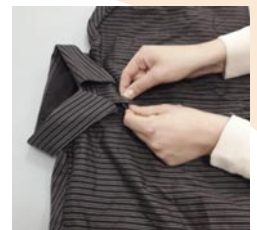
The following are strategies that may help to improve your child's selfcare skills:

DRESSING SKILLS:

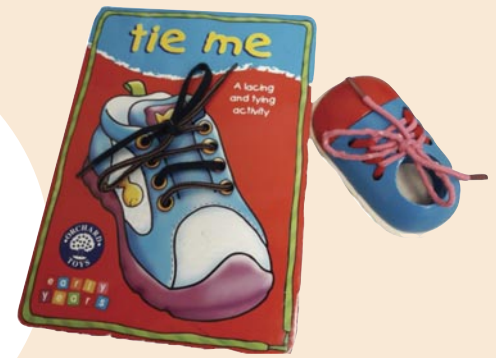
- Undressing is easier than dressing so start with encouraging independence in undressing tasks first.
- If there is more time at the weekend initially, work on dressing during these times.
- Sitting down when putting on pants, socks and shoes initially may be easier.
- Provide cues for front and back and left and right, lay clothes out in the order that your child will put them on.
- Use socks with coloured toes and heels.
- To help with placing shoes onto the correct feet, place half of a sticker on the inside of each shoe. When your child lines up their shoes the sticker will join together and they can easily see which shoe should be on the left or right foot. You can make your own by cutting a sticker in half. Stickers pictured are also available to purchase online (Amazon or <http://shoeezooz.com/> Educational shoe stickers for kids).
- Allow your child to complete the final step and give more opportunity to complete more of the task as confidence grows. Working step by step backwards.
For example; **Day 1:** Pull up the pants. **Day 2:** Put in the right leg and pull up the pants. **Day 3:** Put in the left leg and right leg and pull up the pants.
- Begin with large buttons and when your child has mastered these, move onto smaller buttons. Remind the child to get their pinching fingers ready, that is, the thumb and index/pointer finger. Remind the child to tuck the other fingers away into their palm.
- Practise buttoning by placing a shirt/cardigan on the table in front of your child before practising on the body. Make a button snake. <http://mamaot.com/button-snake/>
- Remember to provide a Verbal prompt of "Pinch, Push, Pull"
- If aligning the buttons is tricky begin buttoning from the bottom up, have a mirror nearby.
- Create a picture plan of dressing tasks-take photos of your child's clothes and ask your child to put them in order e.g. what goes on first. Picture plans can be created using your own photos or can be found online.

Social stories describing the steps involved in self care tasks can also be found online at <https://learningforapurpose.com/personal-hygiene-skills-ebook/>

- Use the picture plan from day to day reducing the level of physical help being given to your child.



- When learning to tie shoe laces break the task into steps.
- Write out each step using your child's own words.
For example **Step 1:** Pick up the laces, cross them, the lace that goes over goes under, making a knot. **Step 2.** Pick up the right or left lace (depending on whether the child is right or left handed), make a bunny ear/hoop/circle/loop and so on.
- Getting your child to describe each step and what is happening will help them to remember the steps more easily.
- Practise tying shoe laces with a shoe on the table in front of the child before placing it on the foot. You could start by using two different coloured laces. Please refer to the following website for further ideas. www.fieggen.com/shoelace



TOILETING:

- To prepare for wiping-Place stickers on your child's pants/bottom area and see if they can reach back and remove the stickers, encourage use of the dominant/doing hand.
- When sitting on the toilet ensure your child's feet are supported to help with wiping.
- If your child's feet cannot yet reach the ground use a step stool.
- Tape a picture plan to the wall near the toilet to explain each step e.g. when to stop wiping.
- If your child does not like the feel of toilet paper consider the use of flushable wet wipes.
- To help boys with aim when urinating consider placing a waterproof sticker on the inside of the toilet bowl or use a marker.



BRUSHING TEETH:

- Supervise dental hygiene.
- Encourage a routine of tooth brushing at least twice a day.
- Create a visual for the bedside to remind the child about tooth brushing before bed.
- Use a timer when brushing teeth.
- Consider child sized toothbrush.
- Advice can be sought from the dentist on flavourless toothpaste.
- Vibratory toothbrush can help a child who is sensitive to touch.

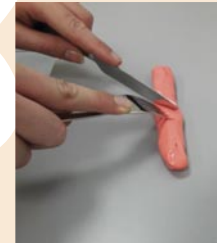
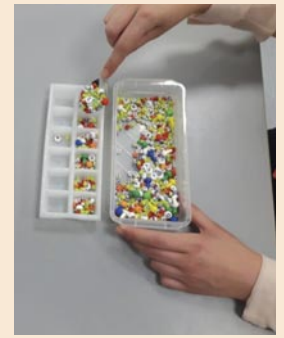


FEEDING:

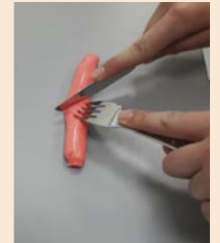
- Ensure your child is sitting at the table with their feet supported.
- If your child's feet are not yet able to reach the floor consider using a lower table and chair or use of a foot step.
- Having their feet resting on either the floor or foot step will support a child's posture when feeding.
- Use child-sized cutlery.
- Initially practice away from meals to reduce stress at mealtimes.



- Incorporate use of cutlery into games i.e. spooning marbles into containers, have a tea party.
- Show your child how to hold the cutlery-prompt on the role of the 'doing and helping hand'.
- The doing/dominant hand holds the knife and the helper/non dominant hand holds the fork.
- Prompt your child to hold the knife and fork in fist grip, then use their index finger/pointer finger to control the cutlery with each hand.
- The index finger of the dominant hand is placed on top of the knife and the index finger of the non-dominant hand is placed on the back of the fork.
- Practise dropping and picking up cutlery, learning how to position the knife and fork.
- Prompt your child to hold steady and saw back and forward with knife.
- If your child has difficulty controlling both hands at the same time, practice using the knife separately then together.



Left handed:
Knife is held in
the left hand.



Right handed:
Knife is held in
the right hand

BATHING:

- Use a social story or visual to help your child learn the steps to showering. Social stories and visuals can be found online.
- Your child can create a list/diagram of the items needed for showering to help with organisation.
- For younger children make bathing fun using water toys.
- Allow time for play after washing where possible.
- If washing hair is challenging for your child consider completing this separate to bathing.
- Count backwards from ten to let your child know that hair washing will end soon and they can have a break after ten seconds. Alternatively for younger children sing a rhyme/song.
- Consider use of a face cloth over the eyes or goggles in the shower. Shampoo eye shield or face guard available online.

NAIL CLIPPING:

- Brush the nails with a nail brush prior to cutting to make the child less sensitive to the feel/touch. Your child could routinely immerse their finger tips in cold water before nail cutting to desensitise the area.
- Create more opportunities for tactile play to make your child more comfortable with touch and the feeling of certain textures. Your child can place their hands into boxes filled with rice or sand and find objects with their hands.
- Consider a hand massage prior to cutting.
- A scissors can often cut too close to the skin for a child that is sensitive to touch. A nail clippers can be easier to tolerate. A nail file could also be used.
- Apply hand cream to the skin.
- Apply deep pressure when holding the hand making the child less sensitise to the light touch from the nail clippers.
- Consider using a rhyme or singing a song to distract your child from their nails being cut.

