



# Self-Care Skills Advice Pack

## Contents:

	Page(s):
• Dressing Skills Advice	2-3
• Dressing Equipment	4
• Toilet Training Advice	5-6
• Toileting Equipment	7
• Bottom Wiping Skills Advice	8
• Sleep Advice	9-10
• Cutlery Skills Advice	11
• Mealtime Equipment	12-13

# Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

## Dressing

Dressing is a complex task that involves a variety of skills. We require planning, organisation and sequential skills to work out the order of dressing along with where we need to position ourselves for the task. Gross motor skills are required for balance and fine motor skills are required for fastening buttons and zips.



### **Possible difficulties children may experience**

1. Maintaining balance during dressing
2. Fine motor skills when using fastenings (zips, buttons, laces)
3. Sequencing the activity (putting on clothes in the correct order)
4. Organising the clothes on the body (putting on clothes the correct way round)
5. Getting changed for P.E lessons
6. Undressing their bottom half for toileting

### **Strategies to support the child in developing this skill**

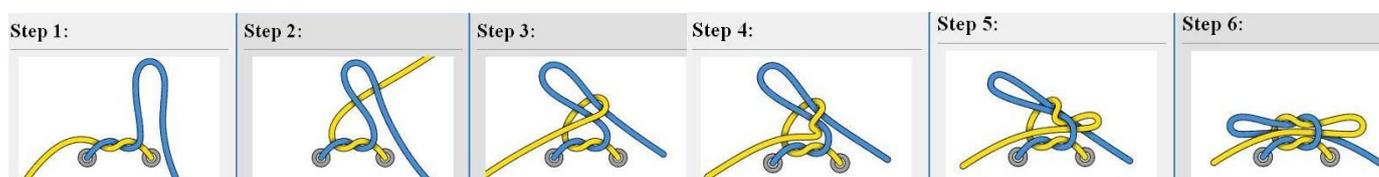
- Practise independence with dressing at less stressful times, such as at bath time, weekends or school holidays
- A child will be able to undress before they can dress themselves, therefore practice undressing first
- Practice with easier, looser clothes such as pyjamas
- Practice in front of a mirror so that the child can see what they are doing, this helps to provide visual cues for hard to see clothing like top buttons
- Encourage the child to sit on a chair or on the floor to support with balance
- Elasticised waistbands and minimal fastenings are helpful when first learning to dress. For girls wearing trousers rather than tights is easier on days when PE is planned
- Clothes that have a motif / picture on the front or another distinguishing feature allow the child to recognise when clothing is on the right way round
- Focus on one item of clothing at a time. Start the first steps of the process for the child and then encourage them to continue. Gradually encourage the child to do more for themselves as they become more confident
- Verbally reinforce the dressing process. For example, when dressing into trousers talk through the trouser going over the foot, ankle and knee etc

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- Having a dressing sequencing chart can be useful to provide visual cues for the order of dressing
- A reward system can be useful if felt appropriate. One idea to increase motivation is getting dressed to go out to play. For example changing socks, shoes, and putting on coat etc

## Practicing buttons, zips, laces and socks

- Practising threading tasks will help with understanding the concept of pushing a button through a hole or zip through the clasp
- Practise fastening of buttons and zips on clothes laid out in front of your child
- Start with larger, flat buttons and then progress onto smaller ones
- Use a pipe cleaner to thread through the clasp of the zip to help with identifying where the zip needs to be housed. Attach a key ring or toy to the zip to support pulling up
- Sew different sized buttons on to strips cut from flannels or old pieces of material and cut holes in strips of flannel or pieces of the material. Encourage your child to attach the pieces together in a chain
- For socks, practice the movements required by using a hair band whilst sitting, encourage your child to place their foot through the hair band so that it fits around the ankle
- For laces, choose one method of lace tying, and teach it consistently. If the child is left handed find a left handed adult to help them with this skill
- Make sure that you and the child are side by side rather than opposite each other when you demonstrate
- When starting with shoe laces try with two differently coloured laces tied together as it will make it easier for you to describe which lace you want the child to manipulate
- Split up the entire process and teach it in steps, making sure the child is confident in each step before moving on



# Occupational Therapy Equipment Advice

## Dressing

Dressing equipment aids can support the child in practicing and become more independent in the skill.

Equipment	Used for	Where to purchase
<b>Button Hook</b> 	<p>The one handed buttoning aid hook is a dressing aid and a simple tool for anyone who has trouble with buttons.</p> <p>This simple tool provides support to button pants, trousers, shirts and blouses. It has a comfortable grip.</p>	<a href="https://www.otstores.co.uk/p/button_hooks/category/77">https://www.otstores.co.uk/p/button_hooks/category/77</a>
<b>Bra Angel</b> 	<p>The bra angel supports independence of fastening bras for young ladies who have the use of one hand.</p>	<a href="https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/dressing-and-comfort-aids/dressing-aids/bra-angel-dressing-aid">https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/dressing-and-comfort-aids/dressing-aids/bra-angel-dressing-aid</a>
<b>Coiler Shoe Laces</b> (also known as Spring Laces) 	<p>These elastic based laces do not require tying. Lace the shoes up and release the laces at the required pressure and the lace will coil to keep in place.</p>	<a href="https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/dressing-and-comfort-aids/elastic-and-specialist-shoe-laces/coiler-shoe-laces-black">https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/dressing-and-comfort-aids/elastic-and-specialist-shoe-laces/coiler-shoe-laces-black</a>
<b>Elastic Shoelaces</b> 	<p>Shoes can be pre-laced and tied, allowing them to be slipped on or off without tying each time. Feature flat style laces that stay securely tied.</p>	<a href="https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/dressing-and-comfort-aids/elastic-and-specialist-shoe-laces/elastic-shoe-laces-black">https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/dressing-and-comfort-aids/elastic-and-specialist-shoe-laces/elastic-shoe-laces-black</a>
<b>Lace Locks</b> 	<p>These lace locks hold the shoelaces in place, taking away the strain of continually tying your laces. Only one hand is needed to pinch or pull the locks to loosen or tighten the laces.</p>	<p>Various options available on Amazon</p>

# Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

## Toileting Training

There are many different skills and factors involved in the process of being able to go to the toilet independently. In order for a child to achieve success there needs to be cohesion between a variety of skill areas including balance, co-ordination, body awareness, hand function, dressing skills, sensory awareness and language skills.

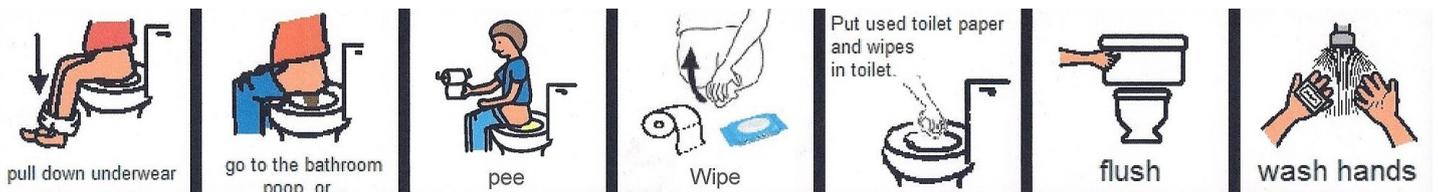


### **Strategies to support the child in developing this skill**

- Consider if your child is ready to develop this skill
  - Is the child showing some awareness of when their nappy is wet or dirty?
  - Do they have understanding of some simple language?
- Avoid starting toilet training during major physical or emotional upheaval at home e.g. moving house, arrival of a new baby
- Make it a fun experience. Try to encourage play around using the toilet;
  - Introducing books, magazines, a favourite toy etc...use potties for teddy so that this task can be practised in play
- Keep the potty or training toilet seat (with ring reducer) in an easily accessible place
- Take the child to have a look at the toilet. Show them how the flush works by dropping a tissue into the toilet or letting them do this. Now show the child how to use the handle and encourage them to watch the tissue disappear
- Watching other family members using the toilet helps the child see the process of actions and also dispels the myths of toilet monsters!
- Practise dressing for pulling trousers up/ down at other times to reduce pressure
- If balance is difficult, boys can start by sitting on the toilet rather than standing
- Have a routine for sitting on the toilet/potty at a regular time. Try to make using the toilet and washing hands a routine before meals
- Clean the potty contents into the toilet each time so that the child can see where it goes. During this time the child could try to pull the chain
- Use baby wipes instead of paper. If paper is preferred then try to use tissues so that the child can use two/three instead of having to work out how much toilet tissue they need

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- If it is difficult for the child to aim when using the toilet try using something to aim at e.g. a piece of foil or a ping pong ball. You can also purchase toilet 'aiming' games from online retailers such as Amazon
- Keep a little plastic step handy, so that the child has a foot-rest when they sit on the toilet. This will support with getting on and off the toilet and with sitting balance
- Some children will have specific difficulties with wiping after using the toilet. Please see the 'bottom wiping' advice sheet for more information
- Talk about the stages of using the toilet and show the child how we manage them, for example:- (Use a series of pictures in the bathroom if they need help with the stages)



## Occupational Therapy Equipment Advice Toileting equipment



A variety of toileting equipment is available via mainstream online and high street retailers. This equipment will provide additional support for the child whilst learning to use the toilet independently.

Equipment	Used for	Where to purchase
Padded toilet seats with handles 	Supports the child to feel more comfortable and secure on the toilet	Available from a range of online and high street retailers.
Family toilet seats 	Adult and children's sized seats are incorporated together to allow the seat to stay in place and ready for use	Available from a range of online and high street retailers.
Ladder training steps 	Allows the child to reach the toilet independently when they are ready to use it	Available from a range of online and high street retailers.
Toilet steps 	Help children to step up to access the toilet or to step and reach the sink for hand washing.	Available from a range of online and high street retailers.
Modular steps are also available in some High Street retailers. 	These are layers of steps which join together allowing the height to be adjusted to suit the individual user.	<a href="https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/bathing-aids/bath-steps/stackable-bath-step">https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/bathing-aids/bath-steps/stackable-bath-step</a>

Specialist toileting equipment can be provided for children with additional needs. This is likely to require further assessment from a Social Care OT. Please consult the Occupational Therapy team for further advice.

# Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

## Bottom wiping

One of the more difficult skills for children to master when using the toilet is independent bottom wiping. This is due to the task requiring a complex mix of co-ordination, balance, core stability, stereognosis (knowing what they are touching without looking) and body awareness.



### **Possible difficulties children may experience**

7. Ability to balance on the toilet whilst wiping
8. Ability to co-ordinate their body movements to reach and wipe
9. Ability to feel where they need to wipe and knowing when to stop
10. Having an understanding of where different parts of their body is without using vision

### **Strategies to support the child in developing this skill**

- In order to make clothes easier to manage, try Velcro or poppers instead of buttons, or tie a small loop onto the zip to make pulling it easier.
- Ensure the child has something to rest their feet on to support them with balance.
- Apply the body lotion (different colours) around the child's bottom area and encourage the child to wipe that cream with a soft toilet tissue.
- Provide opportunities and allow the child times to practice when he/ she is not in a rush for school etc
- Using moist toilet tissue (Wet Ones) may be more effective. Some children are sensitive to touch and so may benefit from using extra soft toilet roll.
- Use a mirror in the bathroom to give the child an additional visual cue when wiping their bottom
- To assist with the twisting skills needed for bottom wiping, play games with a ball where the child passes it round their body swapping hands as it passes behind their back
- Play games with clothes pegs where pegs are placed on the back of the child's clothes including around their bottom area. The child has to keep their feet still whilst twisting and reaching to find and remove the pegs
- Play games where the eyes are closed and the hands have to do the work e.g. putting hand into a bag of mixed items and ask them to find the coin for example. They will have to rely on good tactile discrimination to find the right object without looking

# Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

## Sleep

Often children will have difficulty getting to sleep if they are not in a routine or have difficulty 'switching off' at night. Lack of sleep can cause social and behavioural difficulties and can affect learning and development. Improving sleep patterns can improve daytime functioning and decrease stress.



### **Possible difficulties children may experience**

11. Getting into a night time routine
12. Settling to sleep
13. Going to sleep and staying asleep in their own bed
14. Bed wetting

### **Strategies to support the child in developing this skill**

- Try to get into a regular routine where the child gets up and goes to bed at the same time. This will support their body clock in learning when it's time to 'switch off'
- Develop a 'calm down' routine before going to bed e.g. hot milky drink, warm relaxing bath, change into pyjamas, reading etc
- Discourage the child from drinking 1-2 hours before bed time so they don't need to get up in the night to use the toilet. Also avoid sweets or other stimulating foods 2 hours before bed time
- An hour before you want your child to go to bed, begin to slow the house down. Dim the lights, put on some calming music etc
- Consider massaging your child doing or another activity that they find calming before bed
- Avoid screen time (TV/iPad) before bed as this will inhibit the production of the sleep hormone (Melatonin)
- Make sure their room is a relaxing environment. Use calming sensory lights, night light, soft music or white noise
- In cold weather, use a beanie warmer before getting into bed to warm the sheets and make it nice and cosy
- In hot weather open the window prior to bed time or put a fan on to keep the room cool.
- Use a sleep diary to record sleep problems and note any routines, activities or foods/drinks that disrupt sleep
- Avoid daytime naps and oversleeping at weekends

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- Some children may like to have a sleep chart or record where they are rewarded for going to bed and getting up on time for a certain period of time

## **Specific strategies for children with poor body awareness**

- Use a heavy blanket/double duvet or even a sleeping bag
- Use a double sheet and tuck it in tightly around your child and/or swaddle them
- Onesie pyjamas
- Massage/back rubs/bear hugs before bed
- Have cuddly toys/extra pillows in bed with the child
- Position the bed against the wall so your child can squash themselves against the wall if desired

## **Specific strategies for children with visual sensitivities**

- Avoidance of bright bedroom colours (use pastels), patterns or lots of pictures on the walls
- Use black out blinds
- Minimise clutter at bedtime i.e. tidying toys into box
- Bed tent
- Dim lighting as getting ready for bed

## **Specific strategies for children with touch sensitivities**

- High cotton count sheets for smoother surface
- Ensure bedding is smooth – e.g. no beads, iron-on prints etc
- Try different types of pyjamas – seamless (wear inside out), silky, fleecy
- Remove any labels in sleepwear
- Massage/back rubs/bear hugs before bed

## **Specific strategies for children with noise sensitivities**

- Play white noise from a special machine or electronic music device
- Avoid ticking clocks, dripping taps, leaving devices on standby as they make a noise

Further advice can be found from the children's sleep charity website:

[www.thechildrenssleepcharity.org.uk](http://www.thechildrenssleepcharity.org.uk)

# Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

## Cutlery Progression

Mealtimes are an important aspect of family life. Children begin to develop self-feeding skills from birth. Self-feeding is a very complex task and it is common for children to have difficulty using cutlery to feed themselves. It usually takes until a child is 7 years old before they can successfully use cutlery to feed themselves without being too messy. Using a knife and fork together requires bilateral co-ordination (co-ordination of left and right side of the body).



### **Possible difficulties children may experience**

1. Grasping cutlery
2. Holding the cutlery with a 'functional grip' – fingers positioned securely around the handle with index finger pointed towards the top
3. Loading food onto the cutlery
4. Bringing the food to their mouth on the cutlery
5. Using a knife and fork together

### **Strategies to support the child in developing this skill**

- Start with allowing the child to become confident in using a spoon before progressing onto a fork
- Shorter handled wide grip cutlery will be easier to manage at first
- Start by encouraging the child to stab pieces of pre-cut foods with a fork to practice the skill
- Moving onto using both a knife and fork will require more practice. Play-dough is a good food substitute to use when practicing this skill
- Various thicknesses of dough can be produced to encourage being able to cut through varying thicknesses/ textures of food. Material can be added to the dough, such as grains, seeds and/or rice
- Practise placing the knife and fork in the correct hands and talk-through what is expected. Remember to talk about 'left' and 'right' as there may be some confusion- knowing which hand is which is very useful to tasks such as using knives and forks
- Encourage pushing the fork in the dough first, then cutting with the knife. Try cutting large and small pieces

# Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

## Meal time equipment



Using conventional cutlery is not always comfortable or easy, especially if the child has limited grip or weak hands. Trialling the use of adaptive cutlery (below) can allow the child to get used to using cutlery and develop the skill of independent feeding.

Equipment	Used for	Available from
Caring Cutlery 	Contoured handles to support grip, indents to provide a cue for index isolation.	<a href="https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/eating-aids/junior-caring-cutlery/junior-caring-cutlery-full-set">https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/eating-aids/junior-caring-cutlery/junior-caring-cutlery-full-set</a>
Nanna Manners 	Moulded and shaped handles to support little hands in holding cutlery independently.	<a href="https://www.nanasmanners.com/">https://www.nanasmanners.com/</a>
Easi-eater cutlery 	Head of cutlery is angled so that limited movement is required to bring the food up to mouth. Some forms are set and other options are mouldable.	<a href="https://www.essentialaids.com/easi-eaters-curved-utensils.html">https://www.essentialaids.com/easi-eaters-curved-utensils.html</a>
Easi-grip and Ultra-light handles 	Foam handles that can be placed on cutlery to improve grip, ideal for those that have reduced grip	<a href="https://www.otstores.co.uk/c/kitchen_dining/cutlery">https://www.otstores.co.uk/c/kitchen_dining/cutlery</a>
Knork Knife & Fork Combination 	Designed for one handed eating, the knork is both a fork and knife combined as one. Its innovative design has a balanced handle and finger platform that provides stability and comfort. The bevelled edge of the outer prong provides highly effective cutting without being sharp to the touch by using a rocking motion on the curved outside prong.	<a href="https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/kitchen-aids/kitchen-knives-and-utensils/knork-fork-combination">https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/kitchen-aids/kitchen-knives-and-utensils/knork-fork-combination</a>

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<p>Spork</p> 	<p>Similar to the knork, this has been designed for one handed eating and is a spoon and fork combination.</p>	
<p>Non-slip matting</p> 	<p>Designed to help keep the plate/bowl in place on a smooth surface. Also available in different shapes and on a roll.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/non-slip-mats-and-grips/dycem-non-slip-mat-rectangle">https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/non-slip-mats-and-grips/dycem-non-slip-mat-rectangle</a></p>
<p>Sloped plate</p> 	<p>With a high back and low front, this sloped plate lets food slide towards the front, making it much easier to see and scoop up.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/plates-bowls/manoy-sloped-plate">https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/plates-bowls/manoy-sloped-plate</a></p>
<p>Plate surround</p> 	<p>Simply clipping to the side of your plate, the plate surround prevents food spilling off and enables you to scoop food against the surround with just one hand.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/plates-bowls/plate-surround">https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/plates-bowls/plate-surround</a></p>
<p>Cups and Beakers (various models)</p> 	<p>Designed for children that are having difficulty drinking from a regular cup.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/cups-straws-beakers-mugs?p=2">https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/eating-drinking-aids/cups-straws-beakers-mugs?p=2</a></p>