



Dressing



- Be conscious of sensitivities regarding texture; buy clothing you know your child will like (it is more valuable for your child to be at school in an uncoordinated outfit feeling calm than to have your child at school looking beautiful and upset).
- Build a wardrobe of comfortable clothing for your child.
- Encourage deep-pressure activities prior to dressing to decrease the tactile sensitivities.
- Wear underclothes inside out to prevent scratching seams and tags; or remove tags / labels completely.
- Increase hat tolerance through massage of the scalp and putting hat on in front of the mirror.
- Be aware of audio and visual overload and minimize it.
- Dress the child in front of a mirror to add visual clues to assist with motor planning.
- If your child is having difficulty initiating an action, start the action and have your child complete the action (e.g. pulling up a zip).
- If your child is fearful when body position is changed, dress him or her in one position (toddlers can have their nappies changed in a standing position).
- If your child has sensitive feet, have them wear socks inside out and wash shoes to make them soft prior to wearing them.
- Try laced shoes because they can be more effectively tightened.
- Wash clothing in unscented detergent and unscented fabric softener.
- Dry clothing in a tumble dryer to decrease fabric stiffness.
- Choose fabrics like fleece rather than rigid items like denim.

- Be conscious of noises from buckles and over straps.
- Be sensitive to the length of sleeve/trouser leg your child prefers.
- Be aware of patterns in fabrics and distraction the patterns may cause.
- Ensure that the garment fits well; it is not cutting into the skin when your child assumes another position.
- Organise drawers/wardrobes to help enable a child to choose their own clothing.
- Transitions for seasons may take time: discuss it, prepare for it and use social stories to explain the change.
<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>
- Choose shoes with Velcro closures and add Velcro to button backs and hoops to zips for children with fine motor difficulties.
- Organise clothing the night before – lay clothing out on the bed.
- Encourage your child to put away the clothing so that they know where it belongs.
- If balancing is difficult, have your child sit to put on socks and shoes.
- Colour-code clothing to help your child identify right and left.
- Put labels in your child's clothing to help identify them if they get lost.
- Sing the steps while dressing.
- Try dressing dolls or teddy bears to practice opening and closing fasteners.
- Try backward chaining, which involves having your child complete the last step of the activity, then the last two steps etc.

The advice above is from the following sources:

Jane Horwood: Sensory Circuits: A sensory motor skills programme for children
Paula Aquilla & Ellen Yack: Building Bridges through sensory integration therapy for children with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders

Phoebe Caldwell & Jane Horwood: Using intensive interaction and sensory integration: A handbook for those who support people with severe autism

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