



Hair Washing



Don't fight! For the child with sensory processing problems hair washing can feel like being stuck upside down on the world's biggest roller coaster. Resistance that may look like obstinacy may in fact be real fear.

Try these tips to make hair washing fun and fast.

Pour it on. Instead of bringing the head to the water, bring the water to the head. Let your child fill a cup or a jug with water and pour it over his own head, or invest in a showerhead that can be pulled away from the wall and used as a sprayer. The more control you can give your child over the process, the better.

Go face-first. Leaning forward may not be as threatening to your child as leaning backward, since she can see where she's going. Ask if she'd enjoy playing scuba diver and dip her head all the way down face first. Make sure you're in the bathroom when this is going on, and she knows not to breath in a nose-full of bathwater.

Make it a game. A water pistol, spray bottle, or squirt bottle can do the trick of wetting and rinsing, and bring a little fun to bath time. If you have a tub you can close in with a shower door or curtain, let your child go wild with the spraying, as long as the hair gets wet, too. And if you live where the weather's warm and your child loves running in sprinklers, lather up and let the water play do the rest.

Skimp on shampoo. Skip those luxurious super-thick potions -- they take forever to rinse out, and you don't want to be dousing or spraying your child for hours. Plus, their strong scent may be a turn-off for kids with sensory sensitivities. A thinner baby shampoo is a better bet, easy to rinse out and working up a fluffy head of bubbles with just a little actual product.

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Cut it short. The hair, that is. Long locks are lovely, but they take more washing time than your child may be able to give, and combing time is likely a nightmare as well. Keep that hair as short as you can stand -- as an extra bonus, you won't have to wash it as often.

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