

**South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**  
**Barnsley Children's Therapy Services**

## **Practical Solutions for Personal Care**

### **Hair washing, brushing, cutting; Nail cutting; Face & Body washing**

**Name:**

**NHS Number:**

#### **1. Preparation**

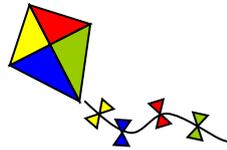
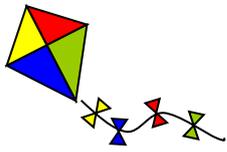
- Before beginning it is a good idea to have used some heavy proprioceptive activities to help calm and organise the nervous system.
- If you need to approach the child, ensure you approach from the front so the child can see you
- Talk to your child about what is happening & why

#### **2. Amount of touch & length of task**

- Light touch can be particularly unbearable for children who are tactile defensive, so use firm touch or pressure (if your child is able ask them how firm they would like you to be)
- Give definite time limits for the task. Use an egg timer for visual cues or encourage the child to count whilst task is being completed. (when the timer finishes stop (even if the task is only part completed – have a break then return)

#### **3. Hair washing/ brushing**

- Trial deep pressure massage to head & scalp before washing or brushing
- It might help to wash/ brush just the ends of the hair, not the scalp, over time gradually work up to all the hair.
- Only use tiny amounts of shampoo and conditioner combined.
- Use flannel over face when rinsing.



#### **4. Hair Cutting**

- Trial deep pressure massage to head & scalp before cutting
- Trial a weighted lap pad on their knee (hairdressers often have weighted shoulder covers which can be used both on shoulders & on knee)
- Have a clothes brush ready to rid clothing of cut hairs

#### **5. Fingernails**

- For fingernail cutting try gently squeezing the fingernail a couple of times before starting to cut
- Trial having them hold a fidget or vibrating toy in their other hand to override the sensation they can feel

#### **6. Face/body washing**

- Experiment with different textures of wash cloth, soap smells & water temperatures (ask your child to pick)
- Practice washing away from bath times by helping with washing up, playing in the paddling pool, using bath crayons (on themselves as well as the bath sides)
- Complete washing in a similar order to support understanding (e.g. Feet, legs, hands, arms, tummy, back, face)

#### **7. Teach independence**

- Aim to teach independence earlier for hair brushing, teeth cleaning, face washing etc., but in gradual small steps. This will allow the child to regulate their sensitivity.
- Teach activities using small steps & celebrate each step they achieve

**Contact Childrens Therapy if further advice or information is required  
01226 644396**