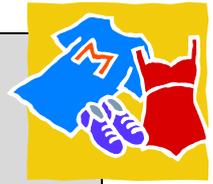




ISCAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE

DRESSING ADVICE SHEET



Children of all ages and abilities may experience specific difficulties with dressing. This advice sheet explores some of these problems and suggests various techniques to try in order to further develop skills in this area.

TRAINING TECHNIQUES

When to practice

It is a good idea to practice activities when there is more time, for example at weekends or alternatively after school is often a suitable time to practice e.g. removing school uniform and changing into pyjamas. Also avoid times when your child is tired and remember to reduce any distractions in the room e.g. turn off the T.V.

Developmental approach

When children are learning to dress and undress, the ability to undress usually develops first. Therefore start with learning how to remove clothing first. Ensure clothing is not too tightly fitting. Use clothing that is slightly larger than your child's size if available. Break the activity down in to smaller stages.

Demonstration

Reinforce any verbal instruction with visual demonstration. Instructions need to be concise and clear. When demonstrating a task it is important to stand next to, rather than opposite the child, so that they are not presented with a 'mirror image'. Reinforce visual demonstration with simple verbal instructions to assist children who have motor planning difficulties.

Backward chaining' strategy

Parents can encourage increased independent dressing and undressing by using a procedure called 'backward chaining'. Backward chaining involves breaking the skill into smaller steps taught in a sequence, whereby the last step in the sequence is taught first. For example, when pulling up trousers, parents could help the child to pull up his/her trousers until they are one inch from his/her waist. The child is then encouraged to finish pulling them up. Once the child successfully completes the task, the parent will on the next occasion stop helping when the trousers are two inches from his/her waist and the child then finishes the task. This method is continued until he/she is independent at this

skill. This approach can be used in a variety of tasks to improve and increase skills.

Cognitive (problem solving) strategy

Using a cognitive 'problem solving' strategy may help your child understand his/her difficulties more easily and help them to overcome the difficulty. Do this by demonstrating the specific task to your child initially in the way that they do it, and then afterwards in the correct way. Encourage the child to verbally describe or demonstrate what the differences are between the two methods. Discussing the positives and negatives of each method will hopefully reinforce why their method may require adjusting.

Other ideas

For younger children, dressing techniques can be practiced during dressing up games. There are also commercially available products (e.g. Dressing dolls for practicing fastenings, shoe lace trainers etc) which are generally available in high street stores.

Use lots of repetition and routine. Work on only one or two particular items of clothing at a time e.g. t-shirt and trousers. Teach him/her the same task over and over again. If he/she over learns the task, he/she is less likely to forget it.

POSITIONS FOR DRESSING

Some children who have difficulties balancing or who require additional postural support, may find the following suggestions helpful:

- Sit on a chair ensuring feet are flat on the floor
- Sit on the floor with back against a wall or in a corner between two walls.
- Kneel against a table, bench or chair
- Use a table in front of child to position clothes
- Long sitting with adult sitting behind



SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

T-shirts and jumpers

General tips:

- Use clothing with a logo or picture on the front. Encourage the child to identify the front and back of clothing. Encourage the child to look for either the label found in the neckline or a picture or logo on the front of the clothing.
- Encourage the child to identify top and bottom of the T-shirt. Use visual and verbal prompts to reinforce to the child which is the top e.g. neckline, and which is the bottom.
- Encourage the child to place the T-shirt on a surface (i.e. floor, table, bed) with the picture facing it, with the top (i.e. the neckline) away from child and with the bottom opening closest to the child.
- Use large openings e.g. v-necks, boat necks.
- Tops with raglan sleeves are generally easier to put on than those with fitted sleeves.

Socks

Taking off socks;

- At first, take off the sock up to the toe and teach your child to pull it off.
- Next take off the sock up to the heel and let your child pull it off from there.
- Once he/she has learnt to do the earlier steps, take the sock down to above the heel and teach him/her to pull it over the heel off the foot.
- Finally he/she should learn to take off the sock entirely on his/her own.

Putting on socks;

- After swimming or bath time, ensure feet are thoroughly dry. Using talcum powder may help before attempting to put socks on.

- Use socks which have different coloured heel and toe sections. Discuss which the heel is and which the toe is and encourage child to identify.
- Alternatively, use socks without heel and toe sections (e.g. tube socks)
- Demonstrate how to hold the sock with heel downwards.
- Encourage the child to place their thumbs inside the socks and use two hands together to pull the opening of the sock apart.
- If the child has difficulty holding the sock open, turn the top edge over. This makes the sock easier to stretch apart.
- Once their foot is in the sock, encourage them to pull it up using both hands, prompting the child to ensure the heel of the sock is positioned on heel of the foot.
- Specialised socks are designed especially for children who experience difficulties putting on socks independently. The socks pictured below can be purchased from the following supplier;

<http://www.ezsox.com>

These socks are designed to help children maintain their grip whilst pulling on the sock, and the picture helps the child to identify which way is up.



Putting on trousers

- Help the child identify the front and back of trousers using visual prompts e.g. the label goes at the back and the pictures or zip go to the front.
- Ensure that the child understands that when placing the trousers on, the label goes towards the floor and pictures or zip go at the top.
- Demonstrate how to use two hands to grip the trousers with both hands with thumbs positioned on the inside of trousers and fingers gripping the outside.
- Alternatively, sew loops on the inside of the trousers and/or use elasticated waist bands.

- Place legs in individually, ensuring that legs are pushed through fully before attempting to stand up.

Fastening buttons, zips, poppers, and hook and eye fasteners.

- Practice using larger sized fasteners first then progress to smaller fasteners when able to successfully manage these.
- It may be easier to practice on clothing placed on a table top before progressing to fasteners on clothing which is being worn.
- Sew a button on with an elastic thread or longer shank so that it is easier to grasp.
- If buttons continue to be a problem, the opening can be adapted with Velcro. By sewing a strip of Velcro on to the inside edge of clothing in place of the buttons, and re-sewing the buttons onto outside edge of an opening it will give the appearance of the clothing being fastened by buttons and not in fact Velcro.
- If the child experiences difficulty holding a zip, attach a small key ring, D-ring or ribbon onto the toggle of the zip to enable the child to grip it more easily.
- There are various commercially available dressing aids available to purchase. Visit www.pattersonmedical.co.uk for further ideas.
- Cuff-link cuffs can be put together with two buttons and elastic so that the arm can be pushed through without opening the cuff.
- Vertical buttonholes may be easier to fasten than horizontal ones.
- Toggles are easier to fasten than flat buttons.
- For children who have difficulty using two hands together for zipping, it may be helpful to attach a loop of material to the side of the jacket which has the slide-in part of the zip. Demonstrate how to fix the thumb of the non dominant hand in to the material loop and then link and pull the zip up with the other more able hand.

Shoe laces



- Ensure laces are a suitable in length.
- Use flat laces rather than rounded laces as these may be stiffer and therefore easier to handle.
- Threading a thin wire through the laces - this stiffens the lace, therefore makes them easier to handle. The wire can be removed once the skill is learnt.
- Practice using two different coloured laces as in the diagram above.
- It may be helpful to learn the technique by placing the lace around thigh of own leg and then to progress to practicing on own shoes.
- By repeating the first stage of the task again (i.e. crossing lace over and wrapping under twice) it will ensure that the laces are kept secure when engaging in the next stage of the task.
- Use ideas to provide a visual image of how the lace should look e.g. "snow man and scarf" or "bunny rabbit ears". Some children find it beneficial to create their own story to remind them of the process. It will be more meaningful to the child if they have created it themselves.
- If tying shoe laces continues to be a problem, use laces which don't require tying such as: curly laces (coilers), elastic laces or purchase accessories such as 'lace locks' to hold the laces in place.
- Alternatively, use slip on or Velcro fastening shoes.
- Visit www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk for shoe lace advice for children who are left handed.

Putting shoes on correct feet

- Identify a picture or design on the outside edge of the shoe. The child then recognises which shoe goes on which foot by ensuring the picture or design goes on outside of foot.

- If your child can correctly identify their left and right side, put reminders on the inside of their shoes (e.g. L and R).
- Drawing a smiley face on the inside of the pair of shoes i.e. one eye and half a smile on each shoe - when the pair of shoes are placed down correctly in front of the child the complete smiley face is created.

Sequencing the task of dressing

- Encourage children to remove clothing and place each item over the back of the chair in the order it is removed. This way, it will be ready to put on in the correct order.
- If clothing is placed front side down after removing, it will be in the correct orientation for putting on when picked up again.
- Pictures or photographs of the activity can be used to reinforce the order in which the activity needs to be completed.
- Encourage clothing to be sorted right side out immediately after it is removed. This way, clothes will be ready and quicker to put on straight away when needed e.g. after P.E.