

Hair Care

Hair brushing, washing and cutting

Hair Brushing

- Often children like to feel in control so encourage your child to brush their own hair
- Use brushes like Tangle Teezers as they do not pull on the hair
- For longer hair particularly at the back, try a long handled brush or comb
- Thicker or wide handled brushes are easier to grip
- You can try using a detangler hair product
- Brush firmly and rhythmically
- Allow your child to sit in front of a mirror so they can see when the brush is coming. This gives them a greater feeling of control
- Count to (or down from) 10 or sing a song such as “If your happy and you know it brush your hair” to the happy and you know it clap your hands tune to help with the distraction of the brushing
- Keep hair to a length that is manageable



Hair Washing

- Try to select a time when you and your child are more relaxed and not in a rush.
- Do not expect too much from your child, just help to create a positive experience as this will allow you to slowly build up to washing hair on a regular basis. Often children are more tolerant of sensations when they are in control of them. Remember to encourage your child to become independent in washing their own hair
- You can try a dry shampoo for in between hair washes
- Some children may find comfort in wearing ear plugs or goggles
- A flannel or small towel held over eyes and face (you can even try and encourage your child to hold the flannel themselves). A hair washing ‘hat’, available from many pharmacies and supermarkets, can also help keep water out of eyes/off the face
- A mirror may help your child see what they are doing, to ensure they can reach their whole head/all their hair.
- Think about your child’s position and what is comfortable and manageable for them i.e. kneeling over the bath, standing under a shower, standing leaning over the sink
- If your child does not like the feeling of a shower head, try a jug or cup to rinse the hair
- Use a timer or sing a song to count down the steps
- Use a fragrance free, no tears shampoo if certain smells are an issue. For other children being able to choose a shampoo, i.e. certain fragrance or character bottle can increase motivation.



Hair Cutting

- Visit the hairdressers or barbers to familiarise your child with the environment and the person who will be cutting their hair
- Schedule the appointment time when your child will be more relaxed
- Try taking in items/toys that can distract your child
- Some children may prefer a towel round their shoulders rather than a cape
- Consider using a mobile hairdresser that's comes to the home



Extra tips:

Some people find certain types of sensory input more distressing or distracting than others e.g. touch (tactile input). Often light touch on the skin can be particularly uncomfortable for some, e.g. from a shower spray or being tickled.

The head is particularly sensitive to touch, which can make hair washing, brushing or cutting an uncomfortable and sometimes distressing experience. Speaking with your child to determine what they find distressing about hair care (brushing, washing or cutting

Deep pressure input can be calming and relaxing for some. Below are some strategies.

- You can try preparing the head first by using a hand held massager on the scalp or giving a firm pressure hand massage
- Push down firmly on their head, ensuring their head is in alignment with their body, i.e. their neck and back are straight. Many children enjoy a constant pressure, whereas others prefer you to push down and relax in pulses. Many children who really enjoy this will push back into your hand. Some children may find deep pressure such as firm stroking, squeezing can be a calming strategy
- Brush your child's hair whilst they are sitting in a bean bag, or in your lap – for constant deep pressure
- Let your child have a fidget toy for distraction
- Using a picture sequence or social story to prepare your child (see below)



