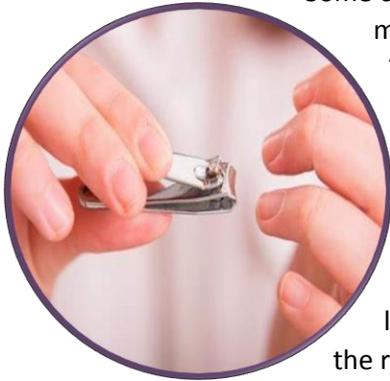


# Nail Cutting



Some children have difficulty tolerating nail cutting which can make this a stressful task for them and their parents or carers.

There are alternative tools and strategies that can tackle the difficulties around nail cutting and make it a less stressful time.

At a time when your child is not anxious about nail cutting, have a discussion with them to try and ascertain what they do not like about nail cutting – is it the sound of the clippers? Is it the feeling of having short nails afterwards? Do you hold their fingers in a way they do not like? Are they scared they will get hurt by the clippers? Understanding the reasoning for your child's difficulty with nail cutting will allow you to support them in making this task easier.

## Strategies to Try

- Try **calming activities first** – ensure the child is in a calm state before nail cutting. If you or your child are in a high anxiety state it is likely that the task will be more difficult, and the child may be more sensitive to sounds or how the cutting feels. Please see the calming strategies for ideas.
- Sometimes a child may not like the **sound** of clippers or the feeling of the 'snap' of the nail. Try different nail cutting tools – nail file, nail scissors, children's clippers. (pictures). New things can be scary at first so try a new tool a few times before moving on to another strategy. Soft nails will make less of a sound and or 'snap' feeling – try cutting the child's nails after bath time.
- Try giving the child a **tight squeeze** (deep pressure) on their finger before and after cutting the nail. This can help to override the sensation of the nail being cut and make it more tolerable.
- Try **avoiding cutting the nails too short** as sometimes this can feel uncomfortable. Aim to trim them slightly but leave a short nail. This may require more frequent trimming but may be less stressful if the result feels more comfortable.
- Ensuring the child **understands what will happen** or **increasing their control** of the task may improve their ability to participate. Try using a 'now and next' board to show nail cutting followed by an activity they enjoy i.e. reading a book or having a piece of fruit. Alternatively, try increasing the child's control and independence in the activity – an older child may be able to cut their nails themselves whilst a younger child may be able to use a nail file with supervision. Baby clippers may help to reduce the risk of the child being cut by the clippers.
- Try cutting nails in **short bursts** – only doing one or two at a time.
- Try **distraction** from the task – put on the child's favourite TV show or give them a tasty snack they can eat with one hand.
- Check how you are holding the child's finger and communicate with them about a **position** that may be more comfortable.



## Top Tips for Nail Cutting

### Calming and deep pressure

These activities can be carried out to prepare for nail cutting

- Use low level or dim lighting and complete nail cutting in a quiet area
- Encourage the child to listen to quiet music or stories with headphones.
- Use a soft voice and slow down your movements and speech while dealing with the child.

Provide the child with pushing, pulling, carrying and lifting activities – known as ‘heavy work’ activities (See separate section)

### Alternative tools



Baby clippers can have a guard to stop the nail being cut too short.

### Give control or distraction

If the child is old enough – let them trim their own nails with supervision. Or distract them with their favourite snack or TV show.

**Trim, don't cut fully** – leaving some length may make the feeling more comfortable.

