



Sensory Processing Service

Dressing



**Caring, Learning
& Growing Together**



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Dressing

Dressing involves many skills: visual perception, motor planning, balance, and gross and fine motor skills. It can be a challenging activity for children who have sensitive (over responsive) touch systems. Dressing can provide many sensory challenges for children who have sensitive (over responsive) touch systems.

Here you will find some information on tactile sensitivities and strategies to try and support dressing.

What is our tactile system?

Touch is also described as our tactile system and gives us information from our skin. This includes light touch, temperature, pain and pressure. Some places such as our face and hands, have more touch receptors than other parts as they are not evenly distributed. This is why we are more sensitive to touch in these areas.

Strategies to Support Dressing:

- Encourage proprioceptive activities prior to dressing; deep-pressure activities are particularly beneficial in decreasing tactile sensitivities.
- Try compression clothing such as lycra that can also be worn underneath school uniform. The deep pressure from the clothing helps provide both tactile and proprioceptive input. This sensory input can be a good tool for calming and, organising and self-regulating the nervous system.



- Give your child time to practice and learn each step – repetition is essential for mastering skills.
- Tags, seams and clothing textures can be irritating and even perceived as painful to children whose touch system is over responsive. Try to remove labels which can irritate your child. Another strategy is to wear undergarments inside out or try seamless socks and undergarments.
- Try to make it fun! A few examples of this may be clothing hide and seek where your child has to move from one room to another to find different items of clothing. Another idea is after putting on one item of clothing, bounce on a therapy ball 5 times before putting on the next item of clothing.
- These activities can make dressing fun and engaging for your child whilst also incorporating some important movement breaks into their day.
- Finding new shoes which your child finds comfortable can be a challenge. Desensitise the feet prior to trying on new shoes with deep pressure massage; this can help reduce the tactile irritation. Try wearing the shoes at home and gradually increasing the amount of time your child will tolerate wearing the shoes.
- Backward or forward chaining can be helpful. That is the child completes the last or the first step in the activity and once mastered, gradually increasing the number of steps they are doing.
- Place clothing out ahead of time. Trial placing out options for your child to choose from which ensures they dress appropriately but also provides your child with choice.



- Pre-wash clothing prior to wearing if your child is sensitive to fabric textures.
- Reduce visual distractions or get dressed in a small space to minimise distractions during the task.
- Encourage your child to accompany you when shopping for clothes; this gives your child the opportunity to choose clothing they like the texture of and will feel more comfortable wearing.
- Break down the activity into steps with clear verbal or visual instructions.
- Liaise with school to see if they could make some slight adjustments to their uniform policy and allow your child to wear a suitable alternative in which they feel more comfortable wearing.

Visit:

sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk
for more help and information.



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