



Sensory Processing Service

Bathing & Showering Advice



Caring, Learning
& Growing Together



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Bathing & Showering Advice

- Engage in movement and heavy work activities prior to bath or shower time. Please see the proprioceptive activities PDF for more ideas.
- Provide your child with a seat and a non-slip mat if they have difficulties with their posture.
- Have toys that encourage 'heavy work' for the muscles whilst in the shower or bath e.g. pouring water from one container to another.
- Find the temperature of bath or shower that your child likes, get them involved in helping you to start running the bath or shower.
- Allow the child to play with hand toys e.g. squeeze toys, sponges and other bath toys that they have to squeeze. Alternatively, cheap jugs, bowls, sieves and spoons give your child the opportunity to play imaginatively. Save empty containers too – shampoo bottles and squeeze tubes from cosmetics make brilliant water fountains and manipulating them helps develop finger muscles and coordination.
- Use a straw to blow bubbles in the bath. Be careful they don't drink the bath water though.
- Use firm, maintained touch pressure through the shoulders during bath or shower time.
- Use a wet towel over your child's shoulders whilst taking a bath. This can provide calming deep pressure, but also keep their wet hair off their skin.



- Using firm, maintained touch pressure, massage your child with a flannel, bath mitt or your hands before and/or during bath time.
- Use firm, maintained touch pressure when drying your child.
- Wrap your child in a bath towel after bath or shower time and pretend they are a 'hotdog'. You can then offer firm, maintained pressure with your hands to put on the 'ketchup' and 'mustard'.
- If your child does not like being dried, try using a towelling dressing gown or a towel hoodie that they can put on straight from the shower or bath.
- Getting out of the shower can sometimes be alerting because of the cold air. Try putting a towel on a radiator, or in the dryer, so that it is warm to put on as soon as your child gets out of the bath/shower.
- Use visuals to support your child's understanding of the bath or shower steps. Adding personal care activities to visual timetables can make them more predictable.
- Tell your child where you are going to wash so they are ready for your actions.
- If the sound of water running bothers your child, fill the bath without them in the room.
- If your child likes music try and create a shower playlist together with songs they like. This can help to relax your child and provide predictable noise. Songs can also be used to help signal the end of showering i.e. 'you only have to stay in the shower for 3 songs' or 'hair washing will only last as long as this song'.



- Sing bath time songs. Slow, rhythmical music is most calming.
- Use earplugs to minimise bath or shower noises and also prevent water going in their ears.
- Use a visual timer or a sand timer to help the child know the end point of the activity.
- Use calming scents or unscented soaps e.g. lavender. Products like bath bombs may make the bath more appealing and add some excitement to bath time.
- If your child struggles with a bath, try a shower or vice-versa. The tactile input from a shower may be more difficult for over-responsive children to cope with and tends to be more alerting so you might want to make this part of the morning routine rather than the wind down bedtime routine. Find the time of day that your child is most able to tolerate bathing tasks.
- If your child struggles with hair washing in the shower try and use a jug to wash their hair.
- Trial different shower heads with different pressure and designs. Children's shower heads can make showering more fun.
- If your child is worried about getting water or shampoo in their eyes, try using a bath time visor or letting them wear goggles. Keep a dry flannel close by, so that they can wipe their face when required.
- Try and make the bath a fun experience, trial (under close supervision) dimming the lights in the bathroom and adding glow sticks or light up toys to the bath.



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