

Bathing Advice

HELPFUL HINTS

Before bathing:

- Before bath time, do resistive activities e.g. massage, wrapping up in a blanket, bouncing on a gym ball, to provide deep pressure and/or proprioceptive input.
- Fill the bath with water before the child undresses. Make the transition from undressing to getting in the bath as quick and as smooth as possible.
- Sometimes it is the sound of the water filling the bath that bothers the child. Try filling the bath with the door closed and call them when it is ready.

Bathing/showering:

- Have your child take a bath or shower after others so that the room is warm. Heat up the towel on the heater for a few minutes.
- Let your child stand in the bath/shower for a few minutes watching the water before actually getting into it.
- If your child dislikes shaving or having their face/body washed by others, encourage them to wash themselves. Self imposed touch produces a less defensive reaction.
- For some children, 'army showers' work best: turn off the shower whilst lathering with soap and shampoo, rinse and get out.



- If your child is showering, use a hand-held nozzle. Let the child control the direction and force of the water. If you have a shower where you can change the pressure try different pressures.
- Install an unbreakable, steam free mirror on the wall of the shower. Sometimes seeing themselves as they wash their face or shampoo their hair will make them feel more secure.
- Use a large sponge or loofah sponge and rub firmly to decrease defensiveness.
- Use fragrance free soap made for sensitive skin.

Washing hair:

- When shampooing use deep pressure touch and may be try using a bath mitt.

If your child prefers their head tilted back:

- For younger children, try placing removable pictures on the ceiling for them to look at whilst rinsing their hair as a distraction.



If your child prefers their head tilted forward:

- Have your child lean forward so that their face is downward whilst rinsing.

If your child prefers their eyes closed:

- Hide a toy under the bath bubbles for them to look for with their eyes closed, and you rinse the shampoo.
- have them hold onto your hand or use your hands to press down on to their shoulders to help them know where their body is when their eyes are closed.

If your child prefers their eyes open:

- Use a tear free shampoo so they can keep their eyes open as they may feel unbalanced or insecure with their eyes open.
- Hold a flannel over their eyes/face – can be used for washing hair or throughout showering.

Drying:

- Use a large towel, and quickly and firmly wrap your child in it. Avoid exposure of the wet skin to the air; the light touch may trigger a defensive reaction.
- Provide deep-touch towelling to the extremities, hands and feet to decrease defensiveness. If the child will tolerate it, provide a firm massage, using lotion to avoid irritation to the skin.

