

# Children's Early Years Occupational Therapy Service



## Dressing Tots and Tolerating Clothing

Advice and strategies for  
Parents/Guardians

**Dressing tips for children with Sensory processing difficulties;**

1. Encouraging a child to participate in heavy work or movement based activities prior to dressing can help to regulate a child's sensory system. For further guidance and advice on these activities please see the handout entitled 'making sense of sensory behaviour'.
2. Using firm pressure through a tight hug or massage can help prepare your child for dressing tasks.
3. Consider clothing preferences and materials. For example, do they prefer silky, cotton, fleece or flannel? Try turning socks and underwear inside out to avoid irritating seams or cutting out labels to prevent irritation.
4. As well as considering the material your dress your child in, also consider the fit. Some children feel more regulated if they wear tight base layers whilst other children may prefer loose baggy clothing.
5. Take into account differing body temperatures and allow your child to dress accordingly.
6. If your child is very sensory- seeking (on the go), try dressing them in a smaller space (eg the bathroom) and give them the opportunity to move around in between bottom half dressing and upper half dressing. If your child is fearful of movement, consider allowing them to sit on a chair with their feet supported and their back against a surface.
7. If your child resists shoes, explore different types of footwear to find something they can tolerate for example, boots or trainers, high tops or low tops.
8. Consider using unscented detergents, or let your child choose the scents from a small range. Washing new clothing can also remove scents that children may find difficult to tolerate.
9. Many parents find using social stories or visual schedules beneficial for their children to help with the task of dressing. Some parents use story books or songs that involve dressing and read this together during the task stage by stage.
10. Have your little one dress their stuffed animals/ toys. Using play can explore the stages or dressing and undressing.
11. Allowing your child to chew or use a fidget during dressing as a distraction or regulation tool.

