

Children's Early Years Occupational Therapy Service



Nail care

Advice and strategies for
Parents/Guardians

Ideas to support Nail Cutting

Some children may not tolerate nail clipping because they interpret the touch sensations as uncomfortable or even painful. Like the face and head, our hands have increased touch receptors and nail cutting involves touch, pressure, sound and vision sensations.

- Engage in movement and heavy work activities prior to nail cutting. In particular activities that involved weight bearing through the hands e.g. Animal walks, hanging or climbing tasks, pushing and pulling activities.
- Involving your child in the task of nail clipping and being clear with the expectations of the task can help children cope with this difficult task.
- Massage your child's hands/feet before nail cutting and in between nail clips.
- Use firm, maintained pressure when holding your child's finger to cut the nail
- Allow your child to sit on your knee or in another comfortable but supportive position for nail cutting.
- Allow your child to choose which order nails are cut in and how many finger nails are to be cut. Then stop at this number and agree another time to do some more.
- Use a weighted lap bag, shoulder wrap or blanket during nail cutting.
- Cut nails in the bath or just after whilst the nails are softer.
- Try filing your child's nails if this is more comfortable.
- Allowing your child to chew or suck on something during nail cutting.
- Allowing your child to play with a hand fidget in the other hand during nail cutting e.g. putty or a stress ball to squeeze.
- Dim the lights and minimise background noise if the child is over sensitive. You can play a nail cutting song or slow, rhythmical, calming music.