

Sensory Strategies for Dressing

Children who are oversensitive to touch often find dressing difficult as they are required to tolerate the touch of the fabric as well as repeated touch of different parts of their body. Using the following sensory strategies may support you child when dressing.

Buy clothing of the child's preferred material/fabric. Children may prefer soft or tight clothing for example bicycle shorts, leggings, sports skins can be worn underneath everyday clothing. Second hand clothes will have been prewashed and therefore may be softer. Look for fleece hats and gloves as these are less scratchy than acrylic and wool.



Seams and labels may cause irritation. Cut labels out of clothes as necessary, buy seamless socks and underwear or turn items inside out. It may be necessary to avoid clothing with certain irritates such as elastic waist bands, cuffed ankles or wrists, appliques or patches, turtle necks and high collars.

Try washing and drying clothes in unscented products or familiar detergent and fabric softener. Wash new clothes before wearing so they lose their stiffness and smell familiar.

Try developing a consistent dressing routine, the child gets dressed at the same time or point in the morning routine i.e. after breakfast so that the child can predict at what point they're going to dress.

- Try dressing in front of a mirror and or using a visual sequencing strip to assist with body awareness and sequencing of the task.
- Consider other sensory difficulties i.e. play soft music or make sure the environment is quiet/calm, turn the TV off to remove visual distractions.
- Apply firm touch pressure to each limb prior to dressing this can be done through use of hands or small therapeutic spikey ball being rolled up and down the limb. Roll a large therapy ball repeatedly up and down the person while they are lay on their tummy using firm and even pressure.
- De sensitise your child's feet prior to putting on socks and shoes by giving sustained deep pressure touch on the feet. This can be done by seating the child facing a wall and have them push their feet against the wall.
- Massage you child's head and hands before they put on hats and gloves.