

Sensory Strategies for Hair Care

Washing

- Try massaging the scalp before washing. Use firm pressure when shampooing and brushing the hair.
- Use shampoo that the child likes the smell of – Combined shampoo and conditioner eliminates application. Use as little shampoo as possible to make rinsing quicker and easier.
- Complete the activity as quickly as possible and give breaks if necessary.
- Encourage the child to do as much of the activity as possible independently as touch processing is easier to tolerate when done to self.
- Using a large container of water to rinse the hair maybe preferable as this will provide a feeling of weight from the water rather than the light touch of a shower. Alternatively the child may prefer to hold the shower attachment directly over their head.
- Give the child warning that you are about to rinse their hair.
- Use a tear free shampoo so that the child can keep their eyes open – Some children do not like shutting their eyes when their head is tilted back due to fear of falling.
- Ear plugs can be used to keep water out of their ears.
- Gently but firmly press their hair with a towel rather than rub.

Cutting

- Try massaging or applying deep pressure to the scalp before cutting.
- Seat the child between your legs and squeeze gently when completing hair cutting.
- Attend the hairdressers and a quiet time.
- Initially cut only a small amount of hair and gradually build this up.
- Attend the same hairdressers or consider a mobile hairdresser coming to the home.
- Give definite time limits for the task i.e encourage the child to count or play their favourite cartoon, when the cartoon has finished the hair cutting has finished.
- Consider providing the child with a towel around their neck rather than a plastic cape.
- Allow the child to change their top immediately after hair cutting.

Brushing

- Try massaging or applying pressure to the scalp before brushing.
- Seat the child between your legs and squeeze gently when completing hair brushing.
- Allow the child to brush their hair independently.
- Use firm pressure when combing.
- Try a tangle teaser or vibrating brush.

