

## CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR

### DRESSING SKILLS

- Learning to undress is easier than learning to get dressed. Undressing before bed is a good time to start.
- Try to reduce distractions as much as possible, ideally in a quiet room with no TV.
- Follow a consistent sequence and technique when dressing.
  - Lay clothes out in the order they will be put on. You could use photos or symbols as a visual prompt.
  - Follow the same technique for each garment, eg head first and then arms for a t-shirt.
- Whilst helping a child to get dressed, talk through the order and what you are doing.
- Chose clothes that match a child's abilities, eg loose fitting clothes with no buttons, when they will need to get dressed faster. Such as when they have PE.
- Loops sewn inside trouser waistband may help your child to pull them up.
- Put your hand over the child's hand to help them learn how to grip and how tight.
- Make sure a child is well supported, sitting on a small chair a stool or on the floor leaning against the wall can help.
- Use patterns or labels on clothes to help learn if it is on the right way, eg label to the back.
- Encourage a child to use a mirror to check, eg to see if their sweatshirt is pulled down at the back.
- **Backwards chaining** is a method that helps children to feel successful.
- The child completes the last step / part of an activity so that they get the reward of having completed the task.
- Once successful, then add on the step before, eg:
  - You put the sock on the child's toes and pull over their heel, the child then pulls the sock up their leg.
  - You put the sock on the child's toes and the child then pulls it over their heel and then up their leg.
  - The child puts the sock on their toes and then pulls it over their heel and up their leg.



## BUTTONS & ZIPS

- Practise doing up the buttons or zips when they are not being worn. Place in front of the child so they can clearly see what to do.
- Start practising with larger, flat (rather than concave) buttons and progress onto smaller ones.
- To practice, place half the button through the hole and get your child to complete the task.
- Be sure button holes are large enough for the buttons to fit in easily. Cut to make larger if needed.
- Talk through each stage of the task, describing what to do, eg find the button, open the hole, push it through and grab it.
- Try larger zips or add a ring / loop to zip fasteners to make them easier to grasp and pull up.



## SHOES

- Make a mark on the inside wall of both shoes to help children put the correct shoe on the correct foot.
- A separate handout is available on shoelaces.

## SOCKS

- To begin with, use tube socks with no specific heel.
- Try socks with a different coloured heel for easy visual clue.
- Make sure that the elastic is not too tight, avoid tight fitting socks.
- Practice “thumbs up”. Then get the child to place their thumbs inside the sock and hock them around the material.
- Roll down the top of the sock to make it easier to get the foot in.



## GAMES TO HELP LEARN DRESSING & UNDESSING

- Use hoop to climb through and pass over the head and down to practice body awareness skills for dressing.
- Threading and lacing games.
- All types of dressing up games, eg
  - Musical dressing, where a child puts on as many clothes as possible whilst the music is playing. See how many items they have when the music stops.
- Undressing / dressing a doll.
- Putting on an old shirt before doing water, sand or paint play.
- To practice push and pull actions, play games where a child has to put rings (often used in PE) on and off their arms.

