

## Bathing and Showering

Washing for personal hygiene and to keep healthy is an essential occupation. Sensory processing difficulties may impact on a child's ability to have a bath or shower and this can become problematic. Bathing is a sensory experience with different smells, textures, temperatures and sounds that may be over whelming and difficult to process for some children.



### Bathing

#### Proprioception

- Try alerting and a calming activities prior to having a bath to 'top up' their movement sensory system before having a bath
- Try putting a bath seat, towel, bath mat in the bath so they don't move around so much – slipping around in the bath can be unsettling and may mean they can't process where their body is in space
- If you are able to, encourage them to sit with their back supported in the bath
- Are they bathing with siblings and their movement is unpredictable causing them to be unsure and upset

#### Touch

- Try having a bath with light clothes on, full body swimsuit or their regular swimsuit – they may not like the feel of the water moving against their body.
- You could try starting off the bath wrapped in a towel in the tub and as they feel more comfortable in the water remove the towel slowly and in stages so they become accustomed the to the water.
- Play over the side of the bath to get used to the feel of the water in the tub
- Consider the bath product you use – do they not like the feel of bubbles or the way the bubble bath makes their skin feel tight? Do they need something more moisturising like an aqueous cream or bath oil (consult your doctor if you child has allergies or skin complaints)
- Try different textures of bath products – bath jelly, bath bombs, bath salts, bubble bath etc. until they find something they like
- Do you use flannels, sponges etc. Do they like the feel of them or not? Can you use a flannel or sponge to encourage them to wash themselves to encourage self-care and calming deep touch feedback? Or do they just need to use their hands as adding another texture in is too much to process?

### Smell

- Consider the scent of the bath product you are using – do they need something fragrance free?
- Have you cleaned the bathroom with fragranced products or had scented candles on – can they tolerate those smells or would it be best to have their bath once this smell has gone

### Sound

- Can they tolerate the sound of the bath being run, or do they need to enter once it is ready?
- Are they bathing with siblings and their noise in close proximity is too much and causes them to become upset?

### **Showering**

The above points can be considered for showering as well as bathing but there are a couple of other points to consider with showering

- Look at the angle of the shower head – does it hit their face/ head
- Check the height of the shower head – does it spray over them in an unpredictable manner
- Can they use the shower head hand held so they have control over where the water goes and when
- Do they need a face shield/ cap to keep the water off their face
- Showering can require less movement – does your child prefer this?

### **Other points to consider**

- Do they have a routine for their bathing e.g same time, same days, part of bed time routine
- Would they benefit from a visual aid to them know when bath time is coming
- What is the temperature of the water – allow them to play over the side of the bath to adjust to the temperature. Encourage them to lower themselves slowly into the bath so that the change in temperature isn't so shocking to their system

