**Developing motor skills – Self Care**

**How to help your child with dressing, buttons and zips**

**Why?**

Children should be given the opportunity to participate in all personal care tasks from an early age. All attempts towards independence should be encouraged.

**Tips for dessing skills**

**From a very early age children can help by putting out an arm for a coat or a foot for a sock. Begin to ask your child where clothes go, so show them a shoe and ask where does it go? It is helpful if children learn about the order of dressing clothes before they dress themselves too so you can ask what next or play with dress-up dolls or paper dolls to learn the order.**

* Undressing is easier than dressing
* Allow plenty of time and use lots of praise. Try to avoid getting frustrated.
* Simplify dressing, do without fasteners whenever possible.
* Allow your child to sit on the floor or in a chair to be more stable.
* Lay out clothes in sequence for dressing.
* Dressing in front of a mirror might be helpful to see what hands are doing and to see if the clothes are orientated correctly.
* Talk through actions and sequences and bring attention to body parts.
* Use visual clues such as labels on the back of clothes, logos on the front, coloured heels and toes on socks.

**Buttons**

**Practise pre-button skills with children**

* Posting games, like pennies in a piggy bank
* Threading games, with cotton reels, beads and big buttons. Work with finer and finer sizes as the child manages.
* If threading is good, try posting pennies through a slit in a square of paper, aiming into a tub. Then use scraps of material.
* Put two big buttons on either end of a piece of elastic and thread bits paper or material as above onto the elastic. Make the slit smaller and smaller as the child manages.

**Once they can manage these skills you can start using button holes.**

* Practise with large buttons on a soft fabric initially.
* Ensure button holes are large enough and put the button on elastic or a longer thread.
* Toggles are good to practise with
* Put toys, games and favourite things in bags with buttons.
* For school clothes or when time will be limited choose 'Velcro' fastenings.
* Place 'Velcro' dots behind buttons so it looks like they are still there and the child still has to match up the material.

**Zips**

* Start to practise zips by allowing the child to play with purses and bags with zips.
* Put toys, games and favourite things in pencil cases or bags with zips.
* Add a key ring or tab to zipper to help with pulling it up.

See '**How to help your child with shoe laces and cutlery'** for help with these complex tasks once they are ready.

**How to help your child with shoelaces and cutlery**

**Why?**

Children should be given the opportunity to participate in all personal care tasks from an early age.  All attempts towards independence should be encouraged.

**Shoe lace tips**

From an early age children will watch how you do a task and may try to do it for themselves.  Encourage this and make positive comments about their attempts.  Remember how hard it is to master shoelace tying and don’t forget to support your child as they begin to manage this for themselves as they may not always get it right at the start.

* Be aware that tying shoelaces is a complex skill
* Make sure your child is seated or on the floor with support from a wall or sofa behind their back
* Thick flat laces are best
* Having one red lace and one blue might help
* Begin with shoe on lap or table to practice, make sure the heel is nearest to you
* You can start by encouraging the child to do the last bit of the task so they are ‘finishing’ it and work back so over
* time the child completes each step in reverse order
* It can be helpful to break the task into two parts the ‘knot’ and the ‘loop’
* Decide on a method and try to teach that, don’t chop and change method

**‘Knot’**

* Learn the knot and get the child to do that every time until they are good at it
* Talk the child through the task and get them to say it as a reminder
* If the knot slips and your child can’t get tight laces you can make it no-slip by going through the ‘hole’ 2 times to make a longer knot

**‘Loop’**

* ‘Bunny ears’ or 2 loops method can be easier than the traditional method as you are doing the same action twice

**Other fastenings**

* Elastic shoe laces
* No tie curly laces
* ‘Velcro’ fastening
* Buckles
* Toggles on laces
* Or try slip ons

**Cutlery tips**

Children very early on want to hold a spoon and be involved in feeding themselves. Do encourage this but be prepared for mess.  Start with a spoon. You can use two spoons, one for you to feed child with and one for the child.

Sit down together at the table at mealtimes to demonstrate how to use cutlery

* Use a non slip mat or damp cloth to keep the bowl or plate still
* Guide your child’s hand with yours to demonstrate cutting, stabbing and spreading
* Practice cutting and stabbing skills with play dough or plasticine
* Encourage spreading action using glue, shaving foam etc using a spreader and then knife
* Use foods that are easy to cut initially ie fish fingers, hot dogs, bread and butter
* Use appropriate sized children’s cutlery available from Boots, Ikea and other stores
* A sticker can be placed on your child’s knuckles for them to focus on, this will help to prevent turning the fork or spoon upside down before entering the mouth