

# 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 dressing 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 the clothes are orientated correctly
- Talk through actions and sequence 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

Practice 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 child manages
- If threading is good post pennies through a slit in a square of paper, try to aim a tub. Then use scraps of material
- Put two big buttons on either end of a piece of elastic and thread bits of 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 things with button holes

- Practice 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 practice 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 buttons are still there and the child still has to match up the material

### Zips

- Start to practice zips by allowing 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 up

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