

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

Dressing



Please ensure that adult supervision is given when completing these activities.

Dressing is one of the first self-care skills children begin to complete and at times elements of this can be challenging, particularly fastenings and ensuring clothes are the correct way around. Children need to have acquired skills such as balance, dexterity, motor planning and spatial awareness.

Remember, it is always easier to undress first. Dressing is a harder skill to develop.

- To increase body awareness, begin by naming parts of the body on your child and consider songs, games and books that will reinforce this.
- Your child may benefit from dressing toys such as a teddy. It is easier to practice this skill on another object/person, before practicing on them. Once they can manage this, move onto dressing themselves.
- Make the task as easy as possible – Don't invest lots of time and energy on non-essential items e.g. shoe laces and ties until it is really necessary.
- When teaching dressing, start with one item only, e.g. trousers first, that way it is less daunting.
- Make sure all garments are big enough, small and tight make it harder work. Sweat Shirts and loose tracksuit trousers may be best to start with. Also consider type of footwear, it will be easier for your child to master putting on shoes and taking them off, if they are slip on/Velcro fastening.
- Use visual cues, such as labels/logos e.g. labels at the back of clothes, pictures/zips at the front. Lay clothes out, rather than keeping them folded. That way your child will be able to see which way is the front and which is the back.
- Try cutting a sticker in half and placing it in each shoe so they can easily identify which way around their shoes should be or label inside of shoes with R and L.
- Your child may find it easier to dress whilst sitting on the floor or on a chair with their feet on the ground rather than standing or perching on the edge of a bed.
- With buttons start with unbuttoning and practice first with larger buttons before moving onto smaller ones. With shirts always do top button first the rest will fall inline.



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- Think about using Velcro instead of buttons (replace button on top to look like a standard button fastening)
- Sitting on the floor, against a wall for socks and shoes brings the task closer without needing to balance or bend over as much.
- Establish a routine (always dress/undress in the same way so that this is ingrained in memory, for example, top to bottom.)
- Set realistic goals i.e. what your child will do and what you do to help (e.g. will remove top from shoulders independently.)
- Encourage the child to use a mirror to monitor what they are doing and to do a final check that they are neat and have finished dressing completely.



Dressing Stages

Listed below are undressing and dressing steps from easiest to hardest. Start at the top and work your way down.

Undressing	Dressing
Removing socks and shoes	Putting on a front fastening shirt/coat/ Cardigan (not the fastenings)
Removing front fastening coat (not the fastening)	Putting on loose trousers with elastic waistband
Removing underwear /trousers/skirt	Putting on loose socks
Taking off T-shirt/vest/jumper	Putting on shoes with Velcro fastenings
Opening fastenings e.g. zips/buttons/ Velcro	Putting on a T-shirt
	Putting on trousers/skirt
	Putting on tight fitting socks and shoes
	Doing up fastenings e.g. buttons/zips

Backward Chaining

This approach can be used to help facilitate dressing. The adult performs most of the task and your child performs the last few steps of the sequence. They therefore feel like they have completed the task themselves, thus improving their self-esteem.

Continue practicing and allow the child to do more of the steps of the sequence. For example, start with task 1 and then move to task 2 etc.

Socks	Trousers
1. Pull socks up from heel to ankle	1. Pull up trousers from knees
2. Pull socks from toes to heel, then task 1	2. Pull up trousers from ankle, then task 1
3. Gather socks and put them over toes, then task 2 and 1	3. Put second leg into the trouser leg, then task 2 and 1
4. Orientate socks, then task 3, 2 and 1	4. Put both legs into appropriate trouser Leg, then task 3, 2 and 1

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