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Developing Independence with Hair Care

Developing independence in any task can be challenging for a child and if your child has learning difficulties, delayed motor skills or physical disabilities developing independence can sometimes take a little bit longer. However there are some strategies that can be used to help them develop their independence in this task.

Hair washing

- Keep everything your child needs for washing their hair in a separate plastic basket so that it's easier for them to find. If your child struggles with reading the labels, try colour coding the bottles so that they can identify them more easily.
- When learning the task of hair washing, break the task down so that they become confident in managing each step before moving onto the next. Practise the steps separately before putting them all together.
- Use a visual task strip to help your child remember the steps, you can do this by taking photos or there are plenty available online on sites such as www.twinkl.co.uk. Laminate the strip and keep it so that it's visible in the bathroom.
- Tasks which involve their hands are often easier if they are sat in a stable position. Encourage your child to sit in the bath when washing their hair or alternatively you could try a shower stool.
- If squeezing a shampoo bottle is difficult to manage, try shampoo bars or a pump action dispenser.
- Try a shampoo/shower brush to help assist in spreading the shampoo.
- Use a 2in1 shampoo and conditioner, as their hair will only need to be rinsed once.
- Having a mirror handy will help your child to see what is happening and 'check' what they have done. This is especially helpful when rinsing the shampoo from their hair and can give them reassurance.

Hair brushing

- Try combing hair with a wide toothed comb first, encourage your child to comb through tangles at the end first and then move up the hair, combing downwards in long strokes, making sure they remove the comb from the hair each time.
- A detangling spray or leave in conditioner can make combing hair much easier.
- Try a brush or comb with wide handles, this will make it easier to grip.
- If your child is struggling to reach the back of their head, a long handled brush or comb will make this easier.

Hair styling

- Try letting the hair dry naturally rather than using a hair dryer.
- If your child does want to blow dry their hair, try a smaller or travel hair dryer as this will be a lot lighter and easier to manage.
- Tying your hair is a tricky task and requires lots of practise, try styles which are tied lower down the head as these are easier to manage.

- Practise on siblings or dolls or try using a hair styling head; this will make learning the necessary skills easier as they will be able to see what they are doing whilst practising.
- Try and watch a 'How To' guide on YouTube, this 'How to Tie a Ponytail' video is really good. Scan the QR code to watch the video.



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Resources for Hair Care

Hair Styling Heads

There are many different hair styling heads available online, such as Barbie and Girls World and Disney princesses. Alternatively, for a slightly older child there are proper hairdressing mannequins which are similar in price; the hair on these is more realistic but it is also a lot longer.



Tangle Teezer brush

The Tangle Teezer design is aimed for gentle de-tangling.



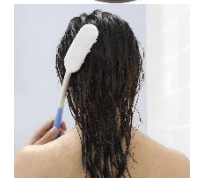
Denman D6 Shampoo/Shower Brush

This circular massage brush has extra-soft plastic pins which some children may find nicer.



Etac Long Handled Beauty Hair Washer

This has a distinct shape that makes it easier to reach further and is shaped to ensure it reaches all over the head and massages the entire scalp.



Long Handled Comb

The extra-long, ergonomic curved handles, make it easy to style hair from front to back with minimal shoulder and upper arm movement.



Long Handled Hair Brush

The extra-long, ergonomic curved handles, make it easy to style hair from front to back with minimal shoulder and upper arm movement.



Transparent Shampoo Bottle Pumps

Transparent bottles allow you to see the liquid inside and easy pump action can be less effort than squeezing.

