

Nail Cutting

For some children, just the mention of cutting your child's nails can send their anxiety levels through the roof. Feet can be particularly sensitive and many children do not enjoy this necessary aspect of care. Try following some of our top tips, to reduce your child's anxiety around this task and make the experience a more positive one.

Preparing your child

- Some children panic as they do not know when the activity will end. Try counting their fingers or toes with them and reassuring them that after 10 you will do no more cutting.
- Try using distraction – will your child be more willing to let you cut their nails when watching their favourite TV programme for example?
- Try and cut nails after your child has had a shower or bath. Soaking in water for 10 minutes makes the nail softer.
- Vibration on the feet can help to decrease the sensitivity of nerve endings. Use a foot massager for 5-10 minutes before cutting your child's nails.
- If your child doesn't like the sound of their nails being cut, soaking their nails in water will reduce the sound as the nail will be softer; using headphones to play their favourite music will also help as they won't hear the noise.

Cutting toe nails

- If your child is sensitive to touch, use deep pressure to calm nerve endings by gently pressing at the centre of the nail to decrease sensitivity
- Try not to touch the end of the nail or the skin by the nail after cutting. For some people this creates an unpleasant sensation.
- Toe nails need to be cut straight across, to reduce the risk of them becoming ingrown.
- Don't cut nails too short. It is better to cut a minimal amount rather than risking cutting the nail too short. This will be painful for your child and will result in them being less willing to have their nails cut.

Other strategies

- If your child tolerates only having a few nails cut at a time, do it this way. Cut the nails over several nights, rather than trying to do all in one go.
- Many families have found, if their child sleeps well, it is easiest to cut nails when they are asleep. Again you can just cut 3 a night rather than worrying about doing them all in one go, unless your child is a very heavy sleeper.
- If your child's toe nails are particularly long you may need to ask your GP to refer you to a chiropodist or podiatrists as they may need to be cut with specialist tools.