



Sensory Strategies for Hair Cuts

Haircuts can be really challenging for children with sensory difficulties, not only can the scalp be a really sensitive area to touch but there can also be many other sensory challenges, e.g. the smell of hair products, the sound of the scissors and clippers, the feel of the cut hair on the skin etc. In addition to this, the hair cut is happening behind them, which makes it more difficult for your child to understand what is happening as they can't see it! Below are some specific strategies that could help make this task a little easier for your child to tolerate.

Preparing for the Haircut

- Prepare your child for visiting the hair dresser, by reading them a social story, this will help them to understand what will happen when you go there. There are some great examples online, e.g. scan this QR code for YouTube video or try www.twinkl.co.uk for a paper based story.
- If you're going to the salon for the first time, go there first for a visit and ask if you can meet your hairdresser.
- Find a hair dresser that specialises in cutting hair for children with sensory difficulties, some salons have ASD friendly sessions, which are normally a lot quieter and the staff are trained to be more flexible in their approach (see list below and look for salons with an Autism Barbers Assemble sticker in their window).
- If going to a salon is too distressing, try a mobile hairdresser who will cut your child's hair in your own home, where your child will be more comfortable.
- Let your child's hair dresser know if they are feeling anxious or have sensory difficulties, help the hairdresser to understand what strategies will help your child.
- Ask your hairdresser if they can show your child the tools they are going to use beforehand so they know what to expect.
- Encourage your child to wear clothes that can be easily removed straight after a haircut (e.g. zip up top or shirt), the tiny remnants of hair that come off during a haircut can feel really uncomfortable. Remember to also take a clean top!



During the haircut

- Bring your own hair dressing cape if needed, this could be a familiar towel from home secured with a safety pin or peg.
- Try some deep pressure to the scalp, neck and shoulders before the haircut starts, this can reduce the sensitivity response on the skin.
- If your child can't tolerate tipping their head back to have it washed, ask the hairdresser if they can lean forward over the basin or use a water spray instead.
- If your child is having their hair washed you could take your own sud free or scent-free shampoo.
- Try a vibrating shampoo brush to massage and dampen down the senses before cutting.
- If your hair dresser doesn't mind, let your child sit on your lap whilst they are having their hair cut.
- If your child uses a weighted lap pad or shoulder pad, use it during the hair cut for additional calming sensory input.
- Use visuals during the haircut, this will help your child to understand what is going to happen and that there is an end to the activity. E.g., sit in chair, cape on, comb hair, spray/wet hair, buzzing clippers/scissors, hair dryer, cape off, all done.





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- If the noise of the scissors or clippers causes distress, there are some quiet clippers available or alternatively block out the sound with some silicone ear plugs or headphones with your child's favourite music.
- Bring your child's favourite hand held toy to the chair, this will help to keep them occupied or distracted.

Useful Resources

Massaging Brush by Rotekt

A gentle, soothing vibrating brush with 26 static-free silicone cones for combing through and massaging the scalp.



Bimirth Electric Baby Hair Clippers Kit

The electric baby hair clipper has ultra-quiet motor. It helps kids and babies feel at ease. The whole body is washable and easy to clean. Safe ceramic blade. The electric baby hair shaver comes with guide combs, cleaning brush and hair covering cloth. The accessories are well organized in a durable nylon case, convenient for storage and carry.



Remington HC4250 Hair Clippers

The quick cut clipper, has a curved head which gives 57% greater coverage, hair can be cut in half the time. Lithium powered with 40 mins run time, it is fully washable and comes with a cleaning brush, travel pouch and 9 fixed combs. This clipper is reported to be quieter.





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ASD friendly Salons

Jim the Trim

Founder of Autism Barbers Assemble, based in Swansea, arranges pop-up hair cutting days locally especially for children with ASD.

Join the Autism Barbers Assemble Facebook group for more details

<http://www.aba.nearcut.com/>

07854 542364



Spirit Hair Team, 3 Commercial Street, Ystrad Mynach, CF82 7DU.

01443 815066

info@spirithairteam.co.uk

Styles and Smiles, 7 Liscum Way, Highlight Park, CF62 8AB

07767 657967

<http://stylesandsmiles.wales/>

Wicked Hair Studio, 1A Cyril Street, Newport, NP19 0DP

07730 106713

Funky Little Chickens, A1 Lakeview Business Park, Lamby Way, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 2EQ

029 2036 0070

<https://www.funkylittlechickens.co.uk/index.html>

Ben's Barbers, 12 High Street, Newbridge, Newport. NP11 4HG

01495 245146

Kadji Hair Salon, 218 Whitchurch Road, Cardiff, CF14 3ND

029 2062 1498

Capello Barbers (Cathays), 4 Whitchurch Road, Cathays, Cardiff, Cf14 3LW

029 2034 4601

info@capellobarbers.co.uk

Capello Barbers (Pontcanna), 1 Pontcanna Street, Pontcanna, Cardiff, CF11 9HQ

029 2022 8644

Caerleon Barbers, 11 High Street, Caerleon, NP18 1AG

01633 546381

Salon Junior, Flowers with a Twist, 12 Sneyd Street, Pontcanna, CF11 9DL

029 2037 2356

Precision Hair Design Cardiff, 298 North Road, Cardiff, CF14 3BN

029 2132 2262