

Hair Cutting

Tips to Make Grooming Easier at Home



General Tips for Success

- **Perform “heavy work” proprioceptive activities prior to non-preferred grooming tasks to aid in calming, regulation, and participation.**
 - Wall push-ups or pushes
 - Squeezes/big bear hugs
 - Wilbarger brushing protocol
 - Joint compressions
 - Animal walks (i.e., frog jump, bear walk)
 - Carrying a heavy object across the room
- **Positively reinforce compliance with grooming tasks (i.e., reward with preferred toy after participation in morning routine tasks or in nightly bathtime).**
 - Ensure that the child knows exactly what they are being rewarded for
 - Use “First, then” language (i.e., “First trim 1 nail, then toy”)
- **Utilize a visual/picture schedule during grooming routines to prepare the child for what is to come (e.g., “iDo Hygiene” app).**
- **Model the grooming task on yourself to increase the child’s comfort with the task.**
- **Play soft, calming music or sing in a slow, rhythmic tone for calming, (e.g., “Ants Go Marching”).**
- **Allow a video or preferred toy for distraction if the task is highly aversive.**

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Prior

- Provide deep pressure to the scalp or neck prior to the haircut to decrease tactile sensitivity and calm the child
- Cue the child to perform calming techniques, such as deep breathing, hand squeezes, or reciting a calming phrase
- Have the child perform deep pressure/"heavy work" activities, such as animal walks

During

- Bring a weighted object, such as a lap pad or blanket, to provide calming proprioceptive input
- Allow the child to sit in the parent's lap; the parent can provide squeezes by wrapping their arms around the child's torso to facilitate calming/regulation
- Provide the child with a fidget toy during the haircut
- Have the child bring a preferred toy or book to the hairdresser to facilitate calming
- If the noise of the scissors or clippers bothers the child, provide a noise-blocking or muffling technique
- Wax earplugs
- Playing soft, soothing tunes (i.e., spa music) through earphones

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In General

- Have the child observe a parent or other family member receiving a haircut
- Schedule the hair appointment at a time of day when the hair salon is not busy, or when the child tends to be the most calm/happy
- Role play haircuts with your child by giving each other pretend haircuts with your fingers.
- Stuffed animals may be included as well. The goal is to increase the child's comfort with the concept of receiving a haircut
- If possible, plan how long the haircut will take and use a visual timer to show the child how much longer the task will last
- Use a visual schedule such that the child is able to understand what will happen before, during, and after the haircut
- Provide a tangible reward following the haircut
(i.e., ice cream, short trip to a favorite park or museum)