



SELF - CARE

SENSORY TOOLS HANDOUT

This handout contains examples of different sensory tools which can be used to support engagement and participation in self-care tasks.



Bathing



Grooming



Toileting



Feeding



Dressing



Sleeping

Self-care tasks can be overwhelming to individuals with sensory processing differences. It's important to validate a person's feelings around their sensory experiences. Here are some ideas to support them during self-care.

Before you Start...



It is important to keep the following over-arching principles in mind when thinking about how to best support autistic people's participation in self-care tasks.



Become a Sensory Detective

The world can be a very unpredictable place for autistic people and, as such, it is fundamental for caregivers to adopt a stance of curiosity when thinking about the behaviours that they see.

While there are many factors that may be interfering with the person's ability to fully engage and participate in self-care tasks, sensory processing differences are often overlooked. These can be behaviours like not being able to accept certain types of stimuli (e.g., tactile - the feeling of tags in clothes). When experiencing sensory processing differences, one can easily become overwhelmed by sensory input and may respond with strong emotional reactions.

Add Predictability First

Always consider environmental supports to make self-care tasks more predictable. These will help a person feel safer during the activity. There are many types of environmental supports such as:



Visual schedules & creating routines

Making social stories

Using timers (visual/audible)



Pairing self-care tasks with a song

Giving choices

Modeling



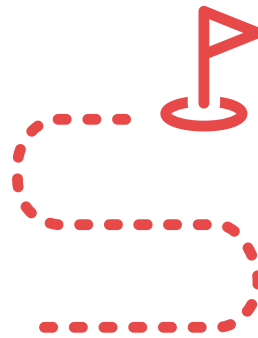
Visual supports



Count downs



Apps



Check out [Holland Bloorview's Autism Occupational Therapy Toolkit Resources self-care page](#) to learn more!

Bathing



You can try some of these sensory tools to make bathing more sensory friendly.



Swim goggles



Bath visors



Waterfall cup



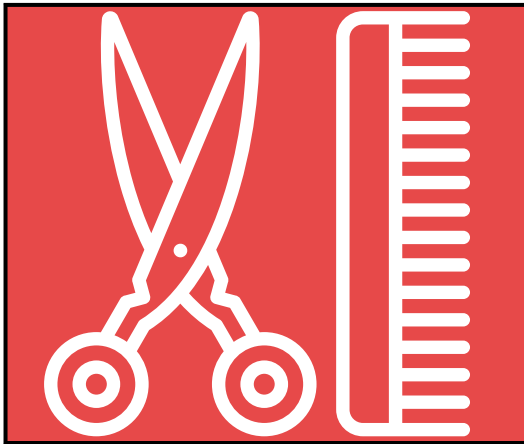
Bath cups & toys



Baby shower head



Preferred soaps & scents



Grooming

Grooming activities include brushing teeth, hair, clipping nails, and cutting hair. You can try some of these sensory tools to make grooming activities more sensory friendly.

Brushing Teeth



Silicone finger brushes

Electric toothbrush

Musical toothbrush



U - shaped toothbrush

3 - sided toothbrush

Preferred toothpastes
e.g., tasteless toothpaste, non-
mint

Brushing hair



Detangle spray



Routinely singing a song while brushing hair



Trialing different combs & brushes

Nail and hair care



Quiet hair clippers



Animal nail clippers



Try to find salons that specialize in children's haircuts, or in creating sensory friendly experiences. Check out the [haircutting](#) section on the Autism Occupational Therapy Toolkit Resources self-care page for more ideas.

Toileting



You can try some of these sensory tools to make toileting more sensory friendly.



Preferred texture of toilet paper



Toilet insert



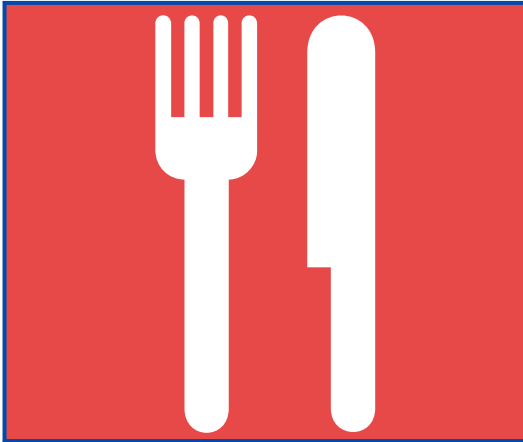
Preferred sensory tools/toys



Foot rest to feel safe on the potty

Other helpful toileting strategies include making a visual schedule, or social story. Check out the [toileting](#) section on the Autism Occupational Therapy Toolkit Resources self-care page for more ideas.

Feeding



You can try some of these sensory tools to make feeding more sensory friendly.



Sectioned plates



Adapted plates/utensils



Foot rest to feel safe while seated



Feeding can be challenging and requires patience. Strategies like collaborative food preparation, food play, and exposure opportunities, social stories and visual schedules may also be helpful. Check out the [feeding and eating](#) section on the Autism Occupational Therapy Toolkit Resources self-care page for more ideas.

Dressing



You can try some of these sensory tools to make dressing more sensory friendly.



Seamless clothing



Tag - less clothes



Preferred materials



Preferred tightness

Sleeping



You can try some of these sensory tools to make sleeping more sensory friendly.



Preferred pyjama material



Diffuser with preferred scents



Preferred sensory toys



Sleep trainer clock



Preferred plush toys



Night lights



White noise machine



Temperature of 20-22 degrees celsius



Sleeping can be challenging and requires patience. Other strategies like creating bedtime routines, social stories and visual schedules may be helpful. Check out the [sleeping](#) section on the Autism Occupational Therapy Toolkit Resources self-care page for more ideas.

References

Holland Bloorview. (n.d.). *Autism occupational therapy resource toolkit: Self-care*. <https://autismsummit.hollandbloorview.ca/2022-toolkit/self-care/>

In addition to the above resource, this handout was made using the following resources:

AIDE Canada. (n.d.). Self-care toolkit.

<https://aidecanada.ca/resources/learn/asd-id-core-knowledge/self-care-toolkit>

Chicago Occupational Therapy. (n.d.). *Strategies for tackling grooming tasks in children with sensory processing challenges*.

<https://chicagooccupationaltherapy.com/uncategorized/strategies-for-tackling-grooming-tasks-in-children-with-sensory-processing-challenges/>

Learning for a Purpose. (n.d.). *31 Sensory strategies with dressing for children with autism*. <https://learningforapurpose.com/2017/07/04/31-sensory-strategies-with-dressing-for-children-with-autism/>

Peske, N. (2022, May 17). Simple ways to make bath time a splash with sensory issues. *Autism Parenting Magazine*.

<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/bathing-with-sensory-issues/>

The OT Toolbox. (2022, March 7). *Sensory tooth brushing tips for brushing teeth*.

<https://www.theottoolbox.com/sensory-tooth-brushing-tips-for-brushing-teeth/>