

Macarthur Paediatric Occupational Therapy Strategies for Children who Experience Difficulties with Haircuts

Haircuts can be difficult, especially for children who experience sensory processing challenges. These can be challenging as the child:

- may not know what to expect.
- may experience tactile (touch), auditory (sound), olfactory (smell) processing challenges.
- may have reduced attention to stay still in the chair for a prolonged period.
- may not be unfamiliar with the environment e.g. salon, barber.

Below are some strategies to try.

Setting the scene:

- Tour the salon / barber beforehand if possible.
- Watch videos beforehand to show your child what is to be expected.
- Allow the child to see what tools will be used and even touch / play with them beforehand with supervision if available e.g. clippers
- Practice / Roll play at home before the appointment.

Before the appointment

- Provide deep pressure to the areas effected by a haircut by giving a head massage, regularly combing the child's hair or using a vibrating massager around the head and scalp.
- Ask friends or community support pages for any recommendations on barbers / hairdressers who may have experience with cutting hair of children with sensory needs.
- Encourage the child! We want this to be a positive experience.



During the appointment

- Provide a fidget box. Allow your child to pick out a few toys that they can bring to their haircut to hold, squeeze, fidget during.
- Provide ear plugs or earphones if the child has auditory sensitivities.

After the appointment

- Allow your child to shower / bath after the haircut to remove any hairs that may be providing light touch sensation.
- Organise more frequent appointments to expose your child to these experiences to reduce fear.

Please discuss how these strategies went with your therapist to review and modify as needed.

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