



Self Care Dressing Myself

Dressing Myself

Learning to dress independently is an important life skill. It gives your child a sense of achievement to master a new skill.

First your child will be able to help you as you dress them. They will hold out a foot for you to put a sock on and push their arms through their sleeves. Next they will learn to undress. They will be able to take off socks, pyjamas and anything without fastenings.



Then they will learn to put on clothing without fastenings. Then they will be able to take off and put on their clothes with some help with fastenings. Finally they will manage fastenings by themselves.

General Hints and Tips

- Involve your child in undressing and dressing. You can do this when they are babies. Talk about what you are doing. Name body parts. Sing songs about dressing. Follow the same routine. Your baby will get to know what is coming next. Be playful. Put their socks on your ears or on their hands. Let them make a choice about what to wear. "Do you want the blue t-shirt or do you want the red t-shirt?".
- It is much easier for your child to learn how to undress. Let them practice taking clothes off first. Practice as part of your child's bedtime routine. Make sure to give you and your child plenty of time. Once they can undress you can work on dressing.
- Loose-fitting clothing is easier to manage than tight fitting clothing. Start with pyjamas or clothes that are too big. Make it fun. Let them dress up in your clothes and you try to put their clothes on. Once your child can put on baggy clothes they can try tighter fitting clothing.
- Make sure your child is in the right position for the task. Sitting on the floor, on a chair or on the bed can help. Your child will feel safe. They won't be wobbling around and will be able to use their hands.
- Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach. There are different ways you can help:
 - Physically assist your child. Put your hands over your child's and help them to get dressed.
 - Show your child. Put your clothes on at the same time as your child and show them what to do.
 - Tell your child. Talk your child through the steps.





Try each of these ways to find what works for your child. Sometimes you might need to use more than one of these methods. Please remember that some children cannot look and listen at the same time. You are aiming to give the least amount of support needed. If you start by physically helping your child, work towards showing them what to do. Then work towards telling them what to do.

- A good way to teach your child how to get dressed is to break down each task into small steps. You can teach them the last step first (this technique is called backward chaining, for more information visit www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/dressing-myself/backward-chaining). Once they can do the last step of the task, teach them the second last step, then the third last step and so on. You can find out more about this further down the page.
- If your child is struggling it can be tempting to take over - don't! Give your child time to work it out for themselves. Give them lots of encouragement and hints if you need to. If needed, talk them through what to do and only step in if they get really stuck. It is often better to practice these things when you are not in a rush. Weekend mornings are better than when you are rushing out to nursery/school/work.
- Instead of automatically correcting a mistake (e.g. twisted collar or button incorrectly matched) why not encourage your child to look in the mirror and get them to find out what's wrong. You may need to ask them some questions to help them work it out.
- Take your time and be consistent. Learning a new skill takes time. Persevere with giving support until you feel that your child is making progress.
- Practice, practice, practice! Give your child opportunities for practice every day.

