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For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year contact NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or via [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

**Our Centres:**

Bull Plain Health Centre, Hertford: 01992 528102

Danestrete Health Centre, Stevenage: 01438 737782

Peace Children's Centre, Watford: 01923 470600

Pat Lewis Child Development Centre,  
Hemel Hempstead: 01442 230861

St Albans Children's Centre: 01727 891100

Tewin Children's Development Centre,  
QEII Hospital, Welwyn Garden City: 01707 328111

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Sensory Strategies

Washing

Children's Occupational  
Therapy Service



**Caring for you**  
*... closer to home*

This leaflet is designed to give you advice on helping your child overcome any issues with eating. If you have any other questions please talk to your occupational therapist.

### Sensory Strategies

- Use unscented soap to decrease sensitivities.
- Use a heavy flannel and apply pressure strokes on the body.
- If your child is fearful in balance-related activities, try showering rather than bathing (because there is less change in body position).
- Water that is warm to the touch is the best temperature; have your child test to ensure comfort.
- Children who are uncomfortable changing the position of their head may not lie down to rinse their hair in the bath; try a handheld shower or cover their eyes with a flannel and use a jug of water to rinse their hair.
- Try to incorporate fascination with water falling from the tap and bubbles into play while washing.
- Dim the lights and minimise sound if your child is easily overwhelmed.
- Be careful that your child does not eat the soap

- Allow choice of shower or bath.
- Try a bath rail because children may be frightened getting into and out of the bath (ask your OT for advice).
- When shampooing, apply deep pressure to head.
- Use pressure and downward strokes with a flannel and a towel if your child is sensitive to touch.
- Use pressure when drying with a towel.
- Dry in front of a mirror and name the body parts to increase your child's body "map."
- Use a small hand towel to dry as it is less bulky to manage and allows for more visual direction.

### Other Strategies

- Tell your child when you plan to touch him or her with the flannel or bath brush or foam brush.
- Use cognitive preparation strategies; for example, "We will wash your right arm and then your left arm."
- Use visual aids to assist with the comprehension of the task.
- Provide lots of water play in a sink or bowl with fun toys (e.g. squirt gun, boat, diver, squeeze bottle, bubbles, bubble bath, bath foam soap, soap crayons, roll-on soap).

[Ideas for Self Help Skills – for children with Sensory Issues](#) Adapted from 'Building Bridges through Sensory Integration' by Ellen Youch, Paula Aquilla & Shirley Suttan