





**COMMUNITY PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND  
PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES**

**Oversensitive to Touch**

DIFFICULTY	IDEAS TO TRY
<p>Over sensitivity to touch affects many areas of daily life, so separate hand outs have been done for specific tasks such as teeth cleaning, nail cutting, hair care and hair cuts.</p>	
<p><b>Child hates baths or showers.</b></p> <p>Baths and power showers provide deep pressure, so if possible use the stronger settings in the shower and run a deep bath at a temperature your child prefers.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do activities which provide deep pressure or proprioception such as pushing against a wall, stretching Theraband or carrying something heavy before and after bathing or showering.</li> <li>• Baths tend to be tolerated better than a shower, so if possible use a bath.</li> <li>• Avoid any splashing of water.</li> <li>• Prepare the bath or shower ready for the child before they undress and try to make the transition as smooth as possible</li> <li>• Be encouraging and use toiletries that are motivating such as novelty soaps or particular toiletries that your child has helped to choose.</li> <li>• Avoid lots of differently smelling products.</li> <li>• Use firm touch and deep pressure if washing your child or encourage them use deep pressure themselves.</li> <li>• Encourage washing all over with soap or body wash experiment with different types, some are smoother and silky in texture than</li> </ul>

	<p>others. Use what your child prefers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start by using, just hands to wash, when tolerated well move on to a flannel, then a sponge and then a bath scrunchy.</li> <li>• To dry, wrap quickly and firmly in a towel, avoid exposure of wet skin to air, and use firm deep pressure strokes or encourage the child to use firm pressure themselves particularly to legs, arms, hands and feet.</li> <li>• Over time using these techniques will help your child's nervous system to mature.</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.bizziebaby.co.uk">www.bizziebaby.co.uk</a> sell an absorbent hair towel which just twists tightly around the head, if hair drying is a big problem once tightly on, apply firm strokes through the towel.</li> </ul>
<p>Child reacts aggressively to unexpected light touch when lining up or queuing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow child to stand in clear space at the beginning or end of the line away from where they could be accidentally brushed past.</li> <li>• Give a special task and allow child to either be ahead or behind the others e.g. the child is room monitor so stays to turn the lights off.</li> </ul>
<p>Child withdraws or acts aggressively when touched unexpectedly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always use firm touch with the whole hand as oppose to light finger tip touching. Teach others to do the same.</li> <li>• Always approach from the front.</li> <li>• Speak before touching to warn the child</li> <li>• Ask permission to touch if upset – <i>Can I give you a hug, you look like you need one?</i> Hug from the side around the</li> </ul>

	<p>shoulders this is less invasive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take turns to hug and see who can give the best hugs. Children who find light touch difficult will often seek out deep pressure touch such as hugging so long as they feel in control.</li> </ul>
<p>Small child withdraws or acts aggressively when touched unexpectedly</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some children from a very young age reject being touched lightly</li> <li>• Ensure clothes are snug fitting and use a sheet or blanket to wrap them firmly before holding them.</li> <li>• Rock them calmly in a rhythmical action, use a calm quiet voice.</li> </ul>
<p>Going to a crowded area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow your child to wear heavy clothing or a hoodie if they choose even on warm days, just be mindful of over heating and give cold drinks and breaks in quiet shaded areas where they are likely to be confident enough to take their top layer off.</li> <li>• Get your child to wear a heavy rucksack on their back. Use water in old milk cartons up to 10% of the child's body weight. Let the child carry this for a maximum of 30 minutes.</li> <li>• Give drinks through a straw or drinks bottle</li> <li>• Use chewing/bubble gum</li> </ul>



more than one piece to give deep pressure through the mouth.

- Brush off unwanted comments with a smile.
- Give regular breaks in quiet places and don't stay too long.
- Use deep pressure techniques before and after.

Child will only use finger tips to play with toys or handle writing tools and child avoids messy play and getting hands dirty.



Sensory Play with Soapy Slime

- Before activity clap and stamp firmly and rhythmically
- Then use weight bearing, or push and pull activities for sustained deep pressure, also use these after the activity to get rid of any unpleasant feeling
- Grade the activities starting from finger tip to using the whole hand
- Use dough, putty and blue tac to provide resistance.

Child removes clothes

- Because they are over stimulated  
Use deep pressure techniques to calm system and have child wear tight fitting snug clothing.  
OR
- Because they like the feeling of air on the skin  
Have child wear lighter loose fitting clothes to give added touch

Toe walking – may do this to avoid contact with the ground



- Massage feet regularly with lotion if tolerated
- Soap and towel dry feet with lots of deep pressure regularly to help desensitise
- Get child to sit facing a wall and push feet into the wall to get pressure into soles of feet and the ankle at 90 degrees
- Progress to a high kneeling position, put one foot forward and weight shift on to that foot, then swap feet.  
NB. If you believe your child's hamstring is shortened, i.e. complains of pain in the heel/back of ankle or can not get the ankle to 90 degrees you need to get them referred to a physiotherapist.

Avoids walking barefoot on grass or sand, and wading in water

Child becomes very nervous, anxious or aggressive.



- Avoid this activity if child is very young and introduce gradually as nervous system matures.
- As above start by rhythmical stamping, then putting weight on one foot such as hopping then standing on one foot and change sides.
- Use motivating activities to encourage them to practise walking on different surfaces bear foot such as making it part of a course that starts and ends with stamping but different things to tread on in between.
- Use wall paper laid out on the garden to make feet painting pictures. Have towels and water ready to wash off quickly, if needed, using deep pressure.

The Therapy Service would like to acknowledge that some of the above ideas are based on the work of Carolyn Murray-Slutsky and Betty Paris.

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

<b>Ideas to try</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	