



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Top Tips for Nail Cutting

Sensory Processing

Issued by the Paediatric Occupational Therapy Department

Some children can experience difficulties with being able to tolerate having their nails trimmed. It can be an activity that is equally distressing for parents/carers and children.

Here are some helpful strategies to help make the experience less stressful:

Before nail cutting:

- Encourage engaging in heavy work activities (activities that stretch the muscles), for example, animal walks, wall press ups or pushing and pulling toy boxes. This helps to calm the nervous system and aids self-regulation.
- Playing with Thera-putty or play dough provides heavy work to the hand muscles to help reduce sensitivity to the hands.
- Try giving a firm hand/foot massage to reduce tactile sensitivity.
- Keep when and where you trim your child's nails consistent and set up a routine, for example, Tuesday after bath time is nail cutting time.
- Consider the use of child-friendly nail clippers that have softer, rounded edges and can be more visually appealing for children or try using a nail file instead.
- Pay attention to the environment, for example, if noise is distracting or distressing, pick a quiet place to trim nails.

During nail cutting:

- Try to trim a child's nails after a bath or shower when the nail is softer.
- Introduce the activity by only doing 1 or 2 nails at a time, and gradually build their tolerance.
- Encourage your child to choose the order in which their nails are cut. If their fine motor ability allows, let them cut a nail on their own with supervision.
- Consider using a weighted lap or shoulder pad to provide deep pressure during the activity to provide a calming influence.
- Try using distraction during the activity, allowing the child to watch their favourite TV show, play relaxing music or encourage use of a fiddle toy.
- Be mindful not to cut far into the nail bed – this can be painful.
- Provide a visual timer so the child knows when the activity will end.

Additional information

Video Strategies for nail cutting developed by Sheffield's NHS Children's Sensory Processing Service.

[Making Sense: Nail Cutting](#)

Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)



You may be able to claim a refund of some travel costs under this scheme. For more information visit the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcosts/pages/travelcosts.aspx

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, easy read, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.



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the QR code to the left.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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