

Top Tips for Hair Cutting

Sensory Processing

Issued by the Occupational Therapy Sensory Processing Team

Visiting the hairdressers can be demanding for people who struggle to process sensory information. There are often loud noises, lots of smells, unavoidable physical contact, new faces, and having to sit still for a period of time.

Please see below some strategies to make the experience less stressful:

Before the haircut

- Try to keep a consistent haircutting schedule, for example, on the same day. If possible try to have the same professional each time.
- Try to familiarise the person with the environment first and have them watch someone they know get a haircut before they get a haircut.
- Massage the person's scalp regularly to help reduce scalp sensitivity or encourage them to rub their own hair dry with a towel.
- On the way to the appointment try wearing a weighted backpack to provide a calming and regulating influence.
- Make appointments at the beginning or end of the day when the environment is calmer.
- Consider washing their hair at home before the appointment to reduce appointment time and avoid unfamiliar scents.
- Ensure the person knows how long the hair cut will take. Consider bringing a visual timer to the appointment.

During the haircut:

- Always touch on the person's terms. Firm touch is often preferred and should be used first to prepare for lighter touch.
- The traditional salon cape can often feel itchy or uncomfortable. Consider using a soft towel instead.
- When sitting in the salon chair, try to ensure their feet have a surface to rest on, for example, the floor or a slip resistant step or supportive surface. This will help them to feel stable and grounded.
- Minimise the use of clippers or avoid them all together.
- Try dimming the lights and minimise noise if the person can become easily overwhelmed. For older children and adults, consider trying noise cancelling earbuds.
- Encourage sitting in front of a mirror so they can see what is happening.
- Talk to the person throughout and describe what is happening and what will happen next.
- Consider bringing fidget toys/items or stuffed animals to help the person feel comfortable and occupied.
- Oral distractions (crunchy or chewy snacks) can help provide a calming and regulating input.
- Consider using a weighted lap pad for the person to use during the haircut.
- Allow movement breaks as and when required.

- If the person struggles to have a full hair cut in one sitting, try building in rest breaks and cutting the hair in one section at a time.
- When finished agree to do something enjoyable or rewarding.

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.



British Sign Language users can use InterpretersLive! a service provided by Sign Solutions. This helps Deaf people to access BSL interpreters, and other communication professionals at any time. More information can be found on our website or by scanning 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

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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