

## Haircuts

Many children find having haircuts very difficult. You may see a variety of behaviours to communicate this including screaming, tantrums, running off, covering head with hands and pushing arms away that come near their hair. This can be for a variety of reasons including:

### Touch Sensitivity

- Others touching their hair
- Hair going down their collar and tickling their skin
- Unexpected touch – can't see what is happening behind them
- The feel of vibrating clippers on their head
- Having hair combed or brushed

### Sound Sensitivity

- Sound of clippers
- Sound of hair dryers (on others if in a salon/ barbers)



### Movement Sensitivity

- Tilting head backwards to have hair washed
- Sitting on a chair without their feet being supported – feeling wobbly

### Smell Sensitivity

- Use of shampoos and products that smell different

### Haircutting Tips

Below are some ideas and tips to try that may help reduce stress levels around haircuts:

- ✓ Make sure your child is visually warned that someone is going to touch their heads. Give them time to respond.
- ✓ Use firm pressure – don't lightly touch the hair, provide firm pressure to the head when touching it. Avoid touching the neck if this is very sensitive.
- ✓ Try using a weighted neck roll (this can be a long sock filled with dry rice, or a heatable wheat sack) to provide both calming sensory input and a block for loose hair going down collars.
- ✓ Use scissors rather than clippers if your child finds clippers distressing. Scissors are quieter and don't vibrate on your head.

- ✓ Give your child things they enjoy to distract them, such as snacks (chew toys if they have these), books to look at, iPads can be useful at these times!
- ✓ Listening to music or singing can help drown out unwanted sounds and also distract your child – they could have their own headphones (as long as the hair dresser/ barber is happy to work around these!) to listen to favourite music on.
- ✓ Have a mirror in front of the child so they can see what is going on behind them. Or equally, try without a mirror if this is too much visual information.
- ✓ Try and find an understanding hair dresser/ barber who is happy to keep spoken communication to a minimum and go at the child's pace. If your child can only tolerate a small amount, consider just getting the sides cut, or just the fringe, and go back another day to do more.
- ✓ You can use usual calming strategies such as a weighted vest, weighted lap pad (or pillow filled with dried rice), bear hugs, deep pressure on shoulders (gently but firmly, stopping if the child is unhappy with this).
- ✓ Using a social story for haircuts can sometimes be appropriate for children that will understand these.

## Contact details

### Children's Therapy Services

Telephone number: 0300 019 2936

For further general health-related information, please ask the relevant department for an information prescription or contact:

Patient Experience  
University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust  
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**We can supply this information in other formats, in larger print or have it translated for you. Please call the Patient Experience Team on 0300 019 8499 or email [patientexperienceteam@uhd.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperienceteam@uhd.nhs.uk) for advice.**

**If you wish to make any comments or to ask about any research evidence used to write this leaflet, please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0300 019 8499, write to the Patient Experience Team (address above) or email [patientexperienceteam@uhd.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperienceteam@uhd.nhs.uk)**

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