

## Nail Care Advice

Many children find having their nail trimmed very stressful. You may see a variety of behaviours to communicate this including screaming, tantrums, running off, pulling their hands or feet away or pushing arms away that come near their fingers or toes. This can be for a variety of reasons including tactile sensitivity and noise sensitivity.

Below are some tips to try that may help reduce stress levels around nail trimming. Please keep in mind that every child is unique, and what may work for one child may not work for another. Also, a certain method that works for a child one day may not work for that same child the next day.

- 1) Nail clippers can look scary.** Try buying a pair of “kid-friendly” nail clippers that more visually appealing. Amazon sells cute cartoon clippers (e.g. lollipop, animals, etc.).
- 2) Re-evaluate your need to use nail clippers.** If your child absolutely cannot tolerate nail cutting, experiment a little. Maybe using baby nail scissors that have a rounded tip will be less irritating for your child or try using a nail file. It can take longer to file nails, but if your child is tolerant of the file versus the clippers, it might be a lot less stressful for the both of you.
- 3) Before nail cutting, ask if your child wants to squeeze putty, playdoh, or a stress ball.** The deep pressure and proprioceptive input may help to reduce your child’s sensitivity to nail trimming.
- 4) Having your child hold a vibrating toy in his/her hands prior to or during nail clipping might help.** The vibration can help desensitise the area prior to nail clipping making it easier to tolerate nail trimming. Another option is to “brush” each nail with an electric toothbrush prior to clipping each nail.
- 5) Consider cutting nails after bath time when the nails are the softest** (this can make them easier and quicker to cut).
- 6) Try pressing down gently on the centre of each nail prior to clipping.** Alternatively, apply pressure by holding your child’s fingers at the fingertip during nail clipping. This can temporarily help reduce sensitivity to nail trimming
- 7) Distract your child** during nail clipping. It may be easier if you can cut his or her nails while he or she is watching a favourite TV show or something similar.
- 8) Ask your child to cut their own nails.** This will be dependent on the age of your child and how able they are. Sometimes being in control of the situation eases the sensitivity to nail trimming. Your child may become upset when someone else is cutting their nails because they have no control over it, but be completely ok with doing it themselves.
- 9) Try not to cut the nail too short.** Your child’s nail cutting issue may be more related to the sensation of the fingers after nail cutting. The change in nail length can feel irritating or even painful.
- 10) Please keep in mind that a child may not always have issues with nail cutting due to tactile sensitivities.** It could be that he/she does not like the sound the clipper makes when it cuts the nail.

You may want to try letting your child listen to their favourite song during nail cutting or use baby scissors, which produce no noise.

## 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:

The Health Information Centre  
Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
Longfleet Road  
Poole  
Dorset  
BH15 2JB  
Telephone: 0300 019 8003

[www.uhd.nhs.uk](http://www.uhd.nhs.uk)

**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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