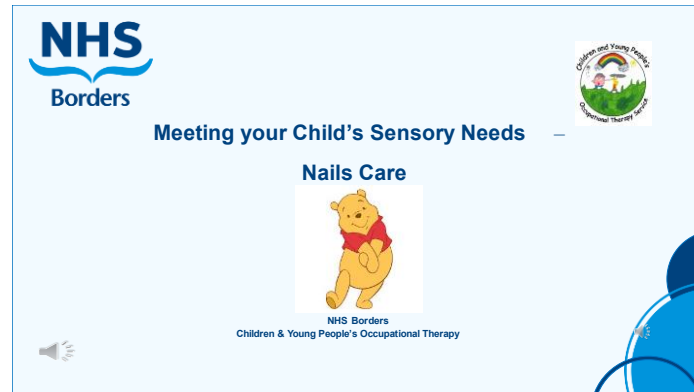


Transcript



Welcome to our video in our mini-series Meeting your Child's sensory needs. In this video we shall look at some of the sensory behaviour your child may display during nail care and provide strategies for you to try, helping you to meet their sensory needs.



Most children complain about having their nails cut but for some children the sensation of having their finger and toenails cut or even touched is extremely unpleasant and can feel painful to them. You may have noticed behaviours such as your child running away to hide when they see you with the nail scissors or clippers or begging you not to touch their feet or hands. They may pull away their hands and feet or avoid letting you touch them. It may stimulate their fight, flight or freeze response which then takes them a long time to become regulate again.

Feet in particular can be a very sensitive area of our body and it's often difficult for people to have anyone touch or go near their feet which makes trimming or cleaning nails even more challenging. You may have ended up trimming your child's nails whilst they were sleeping but they are now growing older and this doesn't feel appropriate any longer. As explained in our video series on sensory integration and modulation, too much sensory feedback impacts on how your child feels, thinks, behaves and responds.

Meeting Sensory Needs

It's important to try to work out how you can help to reduce/replace this feedback with a more positive sensory experience. We shall look at some of the sensory challenges they may be experiencing with nail care and provide

some strategies for you to try with your child. Remember we all have different sensory likes and dislikes, and your child will likely have different preferences to you and their siblings.



You know your child best and will already know a lot about what they like and dislike so use your existing knowledge to work with your child to try out different strategies.

Don't expect big changes overnight. It can take several months for sensory strategies to be used effectively. You will likely need to use the strategies you think work best, for you and your child, consistently for around 3 months before knowing for certain that they work.

Be prepared for them not to work each and every time so have a few sensory strategies that can be used in these situations.

Please remember that your child should be supervised at all times when taking part in the activities suggested in this video.

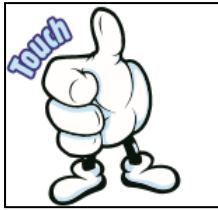
Use A SECRET (Lucy Jane Miller 2006)

We introduced "A SECRET" by Lucy Jane Miller in our video "meeting your child's needs". This is a problem-solving tool for parents, teenagers and even for children themselves to think about the seven elements in sensory and motor challenges and to come up with some ideas of things to change to lead to smoother functioning for the child. A SECRET" is an acronym for these seven elements: attention, sensation, emotional regulation, culture, relationship, environment and task. A SECRET is not a rigid formula for what to do, but a flexible format helping you to consider each of these important elements in turn.

The sensation element is only one part of "a secret". Think about how each of these elements could be influencing the behaviour and how or if these could be manipulated to allow your child to function smoothly.

Now let's think about S (sensation)

The first step when considering S for sensation, is to closely observe your child's reactions, looking for consistencies in their sensory response and ask yourself which sensory system is being over stimulated? We will look at each sensory system which may be involved, giving you some questions to ask yourself and practical suggestions for things to try. It may take a few attempts before you notice any change. If there is no change, go back and look at the other elements in A SECRET. You may need to try a combination of strategies and elements to help meet your child's needs by reducing or replacing the feedback with a more positive sensory experience.



The touch sensory system is likely to be the sensory system that provides too much feedback during nail care causing your child to become over alert. Watch out for these signs.

- Do they refuse to allow people to touch their hands and feet?
- Do they pull away their hand/foot when their nails are being cut?
- Do they dislike having short nails after they have been cut?

Try these strategies for the touch sensory system or experiment with your own.

- Always touch on the child's terms. Ensure they are as calm as possible and ready to accept touch.
- Avoid light touch. Always touch gently but firmly and ensure they can see you.
- Wherever possible, use a towel or clothing in between your hand and their skin until they can tolerate more direct touch.
- Give a firm massage or rub down with a towel before trimming or filing. This can prepare the hands and feet and make them less sensitive. You could try using a tool such as a sensory ball instead of your hand. You can also teach your child how to give themselves a massage.
- As chewing can be calming, try chewy snacks they could hold in their other hand or a sensory chew to lower alertness levels.
- Before cutting nails, try 5 minutes of play with Playdoh or putty to desensitise fingers.
- Try a vibrating foot spa before trimming toenails or use a vibrating cushion on feet and hands. Vibration can reduce sensitivity so they can sit with their feet on top of the cushion or hands underneath it.
- Provide calming deep pressure. Try some suggested in our Tigger Zone video and then during task by pressing firmly on each nail, before cutting.
- Cut one nail per day until they can tolerate more.
- Cut nails during or after a bath as this softens the nail and make cutting easier.
- Try filing nails instead of cutting. This is a different sensation which may prefer.
- Don't cut nails too short. Aim to trim slightly but leave a short nail. You may need to trim more often but may cause less of a reaction if the results are more comfortable.



- Give them control. Self-administered touch feels different than someone else touching us. Encourage them to trim or file their own nails when they are old enough. This also helps to encourage their independence.

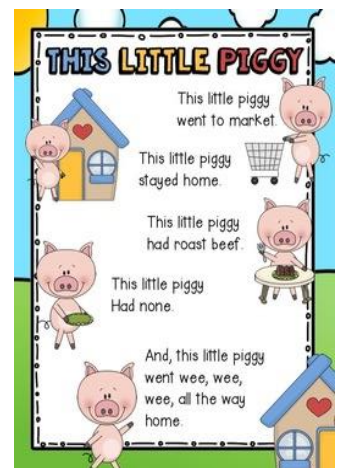


Noise from the nail clippers, scissors or nail file may also be causing them to become over alert so look out for these signs.

- Does your child react to the noise of the nail clippers or nail file?
- Do they cover their ears to muffle the noise?
- Do they start to make a loud noise during these times?

If so

- Provide a noise blocking or muffling technique through either wax earplugs or playing soft, soothing tunes such as spa music through earphones.
- Use a count down and when you get to zero, the noise stops. Then start again when they can tolerate it.
- Sing songs to cover up the sound they dislike for example this little piggy!



For their vision sense look for this sign.

- Do they show dislike at the sight of their nail clippers or scissors?

You could try

- Let them choose their own nail clippers or nail files.
- Use a visual timer to show them how much longer the task will last.
- During the task, distract them with their favourite TV show or video.





Look for this sign that their vestibular system may be receiving too much feedback.

- Do they feel unsafe or frightened when standing or sitting unsupported during these tasks?

If you see this, experiment with these strategies.

- Have your child sit on a chair with their feet supported.
- Use a beanbag chair which wraps around them. If you don't have a beanbag chair, place heavy cushions around them. These will keep them stable and provide deep pressure which is calming.
- Seat your child in your lap and provide sustained deep pressure by wrapping your arms around them to reach for their feet or hands.



Here are some general tips for nail care.



You can use a visual schedule as well as a 'now and next' board to show nail cutting followed by an activity they enjoy, for example, reading a book or eating a piece of fruit. Our Speech and Language colleagues in NHS Borders have a free downloadable resource on their webpage.



Use the correct sized tools. Either baby nail scissors, child nail clippers or nail files. Try increasing the child's control and independence. An older child may be able to cut their nails themselves whilst a younger child can use a nail file with supervision. Baby clippers may help to reduce the risk of the child being cut by the clippers.



Make it fun by introducing a nail pampering time when you are not trimming their nails. By increasing the regularity their feet and hands and being touched will increase their tolerance gradually.

Remember

Everyone has different sensory responses to stimuli. By thinking of your child's sensory systems and observing how they react to small changes, you can gain a better understanding why your child may be feeling, thinking or behaving differently to sensory feedback.

There will likely be times when your strategy doesn't work so have a toolbox full of strategies to dip into as needed.

Give time for strategies to work. Through consistently implementing the strategies they respond well to; you will help them to find a more positive sensory experience and meet their sensory needs.

Thank you for watching. We have hopefully suggested some strategies throughout this video you may wish to try.

We have a pyramid problem solving tool on our website that you can download which may be useful for you. This problem-solving tool helps us to think about the behaviour and the possible underlying sensory causes. By putting the problem at the very top of the triangle then starting to think about each of the sensory systems below, you may be able to identify if there is a sensory reason for the problem. At the bottom of the pyramid, you list the strategies you wish to try.

In this example for toothbrushing, using the problem of tantrums when it's time to brush teeth, we have given examples of the sensory systems that might be receiving too much feedback and strategies you can use to change that, such as trying alternative toothpaste and a vibrating toothbrush.

Once you have tried our suggestions consistently for a while and feel you want to talk through strategies or need support to help implement these, please contact us using our enquiry line or enquiry email inbox.



How To Contact Us...

Prior to contacting the service, we suggest you explore our resources online and on Facebook;

Advice and support can be sought from the service by contacting the team directly using our Enquiry Line or via our Enquiry Email Inbox.

 www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/cypot

 @CYPOTNHSBorders
www.facebook.com/CYPOTNHSBorders

 01896 826033 (voicemail)

 Paediatric.OTEnquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk

We will aim to contact you within 5 working days to discuss your enquiry