

Occupational Therapy Advice Sheet

Nail Cutting



Before

- Deep pressure and massage - use hand lotion to gently massage your child's hands and wrists (fingernail cutting) or feet and ankles (toenail cutting) to provide deep pressure which will calm your child.
- Complete nail cutting after your child has a bath - nails are softer and easier to cut after a bath or soak in warm water.
- Some children may desire to have one nail cut each day rather than all ten fingernails and/or toenails cut at the same time. However, others may prefer to have all cut at once.
- Explain why you are cutting your child's nails- use a visual - See sample below.
- Child may wear sock or glove (with toes/fingers cut out) to reduce tactile input when hand or foot is being held.
- Avoid using word 'cut' and instead say nails are going to be 'shortened' or 'trimmed'.
- Allow child to cut own nails as soon as he/she can do so safely as this makes the tactile input predictable and within your child's control.

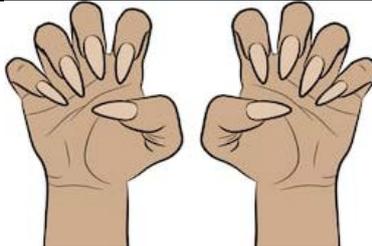
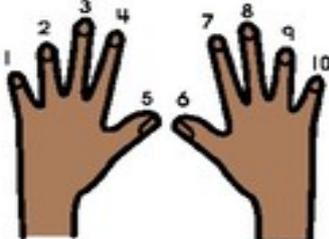
During

- You should hold hand/foot with firm pressure when cutting nails as this is more calming than light touch input.
- Praise and encouragement - talk to your child and commend their efforts.
- Distract your child by talking, using their favourite toy, playing a tv programme, looking at a poster, or using a social story.
- Role model for your child- Demonstrate yourself or other children getting their nails cut at that time in calm and relaxed way.

After

- Hug afterwards - deep pressure exercise is a calming activity.
- Ensure that nails are cut regularly to keep them short and reduce sensitivity to having long nails trimmed short.

Sample Visual:

Trimming my Nails		
		
<p>Nails grow every day. When my nails get too long, I need to trim them.</p>	<p>Long fingernails might snap or scratch me or someone else.</p>	<p>Sometimes, I might get scared of the nail clippers. This is ok- this will not hurt me.</p>
		
<p>I should sit really still when having my nails trimmed.</p>	<p>I can count each nail as it is trimmed. When I am finished, I can count to 10.</p>	<p>Once my nails are trimmed, I can go play. YAY!</p>