

# Self Care Skills

## Self Care Skills:

- Self care skills fall under the occupation of ADLs or activities of daily living
- These are the skills needed to take care of ourselves on a daily basis
  - Bathing, toileting, dressing, eating and swallowing, feeding, functional mobility, personal hygiene, and sexual activity.
- This fact sheet will focus on **dressing**, **feeding**, and **toileting** specifically within the early intervention age group.
- The therapy team works together to address self care and the underlying skills required to accomplish tasks to strive towards independence in daily routines and overall well-being



## Remember:



It is so important to note that every child and their development is **unique!** It is unlikely that your child will reach these milestones at the exact time as another child. Milestones should be used as a *guide* and not a *strict timeline*. Each individual has their own strengths and challenges.

## Typical Developmental Progression

### Dressing

- **1-2 years:** extends arms and legs to poke through holes; pulls off socks and shoes
- **2-3 years:** Able to doff coat, removes shoes and pants, help put on socks, coat, and shirt
- **3-4 years:** Dresses with supervision
- **4-5 years:** Removes pullover garment independently, Able to buckle and zip independently, May begin to lace shoes, dress without supervision approaching age 5

### Feeding

- **1-2 years:** Holds a cup with both hands, Takes a few sips without help, Begins to use a straw, finger feeds, begins to dip spoon in food, moves spoon to mouth
- **2-3 years:** Drinks from a cup (no lid) without spilling, stabs food with fork, Uses spoon without spilling
- **3-5 years:** Eats independently

### Toileting

- **1-2 years:** Expresses discomfort when diaper is wet; sit on toilet with supervision
- **2-3 years:** Can flush toilet, Begins tell someone when they need to go to the bathroom, can wipe self after urinating, wash hands independently
- **3-4 years:** Use restroom independently, May need assistance wiping and managing clothing items
- **4-5 years:** Independent with toileting, washing hands, and managing clothing



## Dressing:

- Selecting clothing to wear
- Dressing and undressing
- Fastening and adjusting fasteners and shoes
- Applying and removing personal devices.

### ***Underlying Skills:***

- Cognitive skills to problem solve what clothes to wear, how to orient them, and sequence through the steps of putting them on and taking them off
- Fine motor skills to grasp and manipulate buttons and zippers
- Gross motor skills for balance and core strength to accomplish the dressing task

## Feeding:

- Feeding oneself and others
- Setting up/arranging the food
- Bringing food or drink to mouth

### ***Underlying Skills:***

- Fine motor skills required to grasp utensils and arrange food
- Visual motor integration skills to go after food and bring to mouth
- Motor control to balance food on spoon and coordinate movements to bring cup to mouth
- Gross motor core strength to sit at a high chair or seat at the table

## Toileting:

- Utilizing toileting supplies
- Managing clothing
- Maintaining position on toilet
- Managing bladder and and bowel movements.

### ***Underlying Skills:***

- Cognitive skills required to sequence through the steps of toileting and communicate when wet or need to go to the restroom
- Gross motor skills required to maintain position on toilet and utilize core to balance and manage clothing
- Fine motor skills to manage clothing
- Functional range of motion to reach for toilet paper and wipe

## How can we support these skills?

There are many underlying skills that make self care activities very complex. As therapists, teachers, and parents we can help support these skills to facilitate confidence and independence in these areas. Below are a few examples of how we can do this across environments:

- Modeling dressing and utensil use
- Reading stories about self care skills that introduce and help a child sequence through the activity
- Incorporate imaginative play
- Encourage fine motor use such as stringing beads to support bilateral coordination skills
- Positive reinforcement is so important as learning new skills can be challenging
- Encourage eating at the dinner table or playing dress up with others as a form of peer modeling



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