

# "Splish, Splash, I Was Taking A Bath" How To Make Bath Time Fun For The Fussiest Of Kids!

**Making bath time fun? Not an easy task for kids with Sensory Processing Disorders... particularly, tactile defensiveness!**

Every task associated with bathing and hair washing can truly be torture for these kids; getting their hair wet, pulling the hair while washing it, getting water or soap in their eyes, using washcloths that feel like sandpaper... and don't even think about getting them under those stinging streams of water that come from a shower head!

## **Bath Time Fun** - by: Jennifer Gove

Bath time can be fun or it can be a real hassle if your child is afraid or doesn't like it. So, we try to make it a fun time for our little ones! Then the problem will be getting them out!

### **Colour It**

Bubble bath can be irritating to little ones causing urinary tract infections, yeast infections, as well as skin irritation. A few drops of food colouring is a wonderful solution adding interest and fun to your child's bath. You can also turn each bath into a learning experience; drop one colour in, such as red, then ask your child what they think will happen if you add a drop of yellow.

### **Measure It**

Measuring cups are fun for pouring and filling in the tub and if you have an old set they are a great free fun set of toys for the tub. They can stack and pour to their hearts content and maybe even learn to wet their hair for washing. Control gives many children the power to overcome fears such as getting their hair wet for washing.

Learning time can be created through the use of measures. Take the one cup measuring cup and ask the child how many of each cup it will take to fill your big cup.

### **Bath Body Paints**

You must use supervision with young children, but we all know you must supervise young children in the bath anyway!

In a few small cups put some hypoallergenic shaving cream (test on the child a few days before on a very small spot for allergies) then add a few drops food colouring to the desired colour. Mix well. Your child can then enjoy painting their toes, legs and belly. I would discourage using it in the face area. These paints are very easy to clean up.

### **Sing Songs Together**

Kids love to sing and to be sung to. Bath time songs like "Rubber Ducky" and "Splish Splash I Was Taking A Bath" are great bath time songs. When my children were very young we played "This Little Piggy" as I washed each toe.

### **My Dolly Too**

Little ones like to do as their parents do. Bringing a doll into the tub for them to wash is often great fun. Show them how to shampoo and rinse the dolls hair. My daughters all loved to wash their dolls hair as I washed theirs. They were so preoccupied they did not even care that theirs was being washed!

### **Gone Fishing**

Wash well with soap and hot water the Styrofoam plates your meats come in. Once you have about four cut some fish shapes from them. Your child can use the big one cup measuring cup to capture his fish!!! See how fast your little fisherman or fisher girl is at catching their fish! If the fish are different colours you can

play fish store and request your special fish and watch them chase it around the tub. This one makes for lots of giggles.

### **Loops**

I save my margarine tub covers and cut out the centres. My shampoo bottles make great posts to play ring toss with. My only caution is making sure when you cut out the centres there are no sharp edges. My older kids love to play this in the tub together.

### **Sponge Animals**

Cut animal shapes from new sponges; frogs, alligators, sharks, and fish are all popular bath choices. But really, the choices are endless; you could even make a fleet of trucks for your little boy! Fabric puff paint would be great to lightly decorate one side of the sponge. Once it is dry they are grate bath time companions. They float as well as stick to the tub walls.

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## **WASHING AND BATHING — SENSORY STRATEGIES**

By Shirley Sutton, B.Sc. (CT), from LLBuilding Bridges Through Sensory Integration”

Use non-perfumed soap to decrease sensitivities.

Use a heavy face cloth and use pressure strokes on the body.

If your child is fearful in balance related activities, the shower may be a better choice than the bath as there are fewer changes in body position.

Water that is warm to the touch is the best temperature; have your child test to ensure comfort

Children who are uncomfortable changing the position of their heads may not lie down to rinse their hair in the bathtub; try a hand held shower or cover their faces with a face cloth and use a jug full of water to rinse their hair.

Try to incorporate fascination with water falling from the tap and bubbles into play and function.

Dim the lights and minimise sound if your child is easily overwhelmed.

Be careful that your child doesn't eat the soap!

Allow choice of shower or bath.

Try a bath tub rail for children that may be frightened getting into and out of the tub (available at your local chemist/drugstore).

When shampooing, use pressure touch.

Use pressure and downward strokes with a washcloth and towel if your child is sensitive to touch.

Use pressure when drying with a towel.

Dry in front of a mirror and name the body parts to increase your child's body 'map'!

Use a small hand towel to dry as it is less bulky to manage and allows for more visual distraction.

## OTHER STRATEGIES:

Try to inform your child when you plan to touch them with the facecloth or toothbrush.

Use cognitive preparation strategies; for example, we will wash your right arm and then your left arm.

Use visual aids to assist with the comprehension of the task.

Provide lots of water play in a sink or bowl with fun toys.

Build up handles of utensils with pipe insulation to decrease dropping.

Use music and motivators

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## Washing and Bathing by Liz

Make a headband out of old towelling (fasten with Velcro) or use a tennis headband. If you rinse the shampoo very slowly, the band should absorb the soap.

Shaving cream makes for great bathtub play - and a swell distracter. Buy the non-perfumed kind.

With issues such as this, I find a triple threat approach works really well:

1. Behavioural - use behavioural strategies (i.e. reinforce sitting, increase sitting in tub in small time increments)
2. Sensory - as described above.
3. Communication - heavy use of PECS or some other augmentative communication system (if needed) is key. The child needs to know what is coming next.

Sticking to a routine so the child always knows what is coming next, supplementing with a visual schedule and lots of verbal praise.

Hopefully, some of the above will be helpful to all?

