School Readiness

A guide for parents and carers with children starting primary education

Starting school is a very exciting time for children and a big step for them in their educational journey.

Preparing children for the changes ahead is a very important part of their transition from early years to primary education.

Children may feel a mixture of emotions about starting school and ensuring that they are fully prepared will play a vital part in their transition.

Preparing for transition – school readiness

Ensuring children are prepared for the transition to primary school is important to encourage resilience and self-confidence.

It enables the children to learn and understand key competencies expected when they transition to the school environment.

Dressing yourself

When children start school, they will be partaking in P.E lessons as part of the school curriculum. This will involve the children needing to change from their school uniform into their shorts and t shirts (P.E kit).

Before children start school dressing/undressing independently can be encouraged at home as part of their daily routine.

Below are some useful fact sheets.

Advice sheet | Ref: CYP ITS ASSA010

Dressing skills

Why do some children find dressing difficult?

Some children find dressing difficult due to movement or learning difficulties.

All children learn to undress first. You can help your child by breaking the task down into little steps and getting them to assist you at first. Then, as their ability grows, you can let them carry out that stage of dressing for themselves.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and not seen improvement after 3 months, please contact the Integrated Therapy Service for advice.

What you may see

- The child being reluctant to take part in dressing themselves
- The child seeking help and reassurance
- Clothes put on backwards or inside out
- Clothes left twisted on the body
- Some items of clothing left off because it was missed during the sequence
- Frustration due to their inability to dress independently

Strategies and Advice

- Choose loose fitting clothes with minimum fastenings. Look for tops with easy openings, stretchy socks and elasticated waists
- Start by encouraging your child to assist in the process of undressing / dressing, for example by waiting for your child to push their arm through a sleeve
- Make sure your child is well supported in sitting or standing so that their hands are free to use. If they have poor balance, get them to sit on a chair or use a corner wall for support
- Start by teaching your child to undress as this is easier than dressing
- Talk your child through the order in which clothes are put on, that is which ones are put on first. Draw attention to different parts of the body and name them to help improve their body awareness

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- Establish a routine to avoid confusion, so that the activity becomes predictable. Keep the sequence of dressing / undressing the same
- Try to practise when you are not rushed. Allow time for your child to cooperate in the process e.g. pause when their arm is placed in the sleeve hole so that they can push their arm through independently
- Practise dressing in the evening or at weekends when there is time
- Lay the clothes out in the order they are put on. Lay jumpers out with the bottom edge nearest the child and the neck furthest away
- When you are assisting the child to dress, give simple verbal and gestural instructions e.g. "give me your foot"
- Practise dressing / undressing during doll play or in dressing up games
- Dress in front of a mirror for added reinforcement
- Provide a visual timetable / schedule. This can help the child by giving a pictorial sequence of the stages involved
- Remember to reinforce their effort and give positive feedback

Suggested Resources

Ball. F. (2002) Hints and tips for activities of daily living. London, Jessica Kingsley.
Klein, M.D. (1995) Pre-dressing skills. Tuscan A.Z, Therapy Skill Builders.

Symbols from Somerset Total Communication

Websites for visual symbols:
www.do2learn.com
www.ispeek.co.uk

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Advice sheet | Ref: CYP ITS ASSA012

Fasteners

You have been directed to this Advice Sheet because the child is having difficulty with buttons, zips and other fastenings.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and not seen improvement after 6 months, please contact the Integrated Therapy Service for advice.

Why do some children find this difficult?

A child may have difficulties doing up buttons and zips for a variety of reasons such as poor bilateral coordination, postural instability, poor fine motor manipulation, reduced muscle tone or visual perceptual difficulties.

Strategies and Advice

Buttons

- Start by using large buttons on a doll, a jumper worn by someone else or a toy.
- Teach the child using the 'Backward Chaining' technique. This means that you first break the activity down into steps. You carry out most of the steps but leave the last step for the child. When the child has mastered that step you allow them to do the last two steps and so on until they can complete the whole task. This will ensure that your child finishes the task every time. For example you may start your child off with the last stage of the task, which is to pull the button through the button hole.
- Once the child has mastered large buttons, move on to fastening items with smaller buttons.
- Reattach the buttons with a thick thread, leaving about half an inch of thread between the button and the fabric for easier buttoning.
- Make a 'Button Box' for a fun and interesting toy. Use a shoe box and make slots on the top (horizontal and vertical). Let the child post buttons or coins through the holes.
- Make a 'Button Board' out of fabric and large buttons. Make the button holes at least a quarter of an inch larger than the button. Sew the button on loosely with strong thread. Place an attractive picture on the button board under the fabric so that after the button in unfastened, it reveals the picture.

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- Use threading cards / games / activities. The same skills and principles in threading are used when fastening buttons
- When teaching the child to fasten shirt buttons, remember to start buttoning from the bottom to the top to ensure the button and button hole correspond correctly.
- Encourage the child to check him or herself in the mirror.
- Top buttons are often very difficult and can be replaced with Velcro or a popper (sew the button on permanently on the outside). Alternatively, all buttons, including sleeve buttons, can be replaced with Velcro fastenings or poppers.

Zips

- Demonstrate how to fasten and unzip a zip by pulling on the tab. Allow your child to assist you by pulling the zip up or down with you.
- Zip tags can be adapted by attaching a piece of ribbon, a zip ring or a large paper clip. This makes it easier to grasp.
- Start with heavy-duty large zips which have big tabs or rings as these slide more easily.
- Practise unzipping a purse or pocket to reveal a surprise!
- Velcro tabs can replace zips to encourage independence.

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Advice sheet | Ref: CYP ITS ASSA024

Shoes and socks

You have been directed to this Advice Sheet for guidance on helping children develop skills with putting on their shoes and socks.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and have not seen improvement after 4 months, please contact the Integrated Therapy Service.

Socks: what you may see

Children often have difficulty putting socks on correctly and end up with the heel on the top of their foot.

Strategies and advice

- Demonstrate to your child how to remove and put on socks correctly and allow them to help you.
- Try buying socks that have different coloured heels and toes.
- Trainer socks can help to establish where the heel goes without a lot of sock that needs pulling over the heel.
- Looser socks are easier so let your child practice with your socks. A little talc can be added to the bottom of the foot to help the sock slide on easily.
- Cotton socks are easier to handle than nylon ones.
- Practice putting socks onto dolls or stuffed teddies.
- Backward Chaining can also be used for teaching your child to put socks on. This means that you will break down the task into small steps, help them with the task and teach the last step first. When they have mastered this, let them do the last two steps and so on. In this way your child will finish the task every time and you will gradually reduce the help you are giving.

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Shoes: what you may see

Children can find putting on their shoes a challenge and much prefer to take them off. You may see:

- Laces left untied or stuffed into the shoe.
- The tongue wedged into the toe part of the shoe, causing discomfort and making it more difficult to put on.
- The heel of the shoe downtrodden at the back where the child has not been able to pull it up over their heel.
- Shoes on the wrong feet.
- Velcro straps not pulled tight so the shoe is loose on the foot.

Strategies and advice

- Start with taking the shoe off properly.
- Sit behind the child and demonstrate how to take off their shoes by undoing the fastenings, pulling the shoe open to loosen it and pulling it upwards with the hand under the heel.
- Repeat the task but allow your child to do the last step i.e. to pull the shoe off.
- Continue practising the task in the same way and, as your child progresses, allow them to do more of the task e.g. pull open the shoe and then pull it off the foot.
- Allow them to practise taking off your shoes for you or shoes off their toys.
- Encourage your child to assist with fastenings.

Putting on shoes is a little trickier

- Start with putting on larger/looser shoes – dressing-up games are a good time to practise this.
- Allow your child to practise with your shoes.
- Open-back or slip-on shoes are easier to start with.
- Teach your child one of two methods according to their ability.
  1. Left foot over right knee and put shoe on – and visa versa
  2. Place the shoe on the floor and let the child wriggle their foot into the shoe.

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- If your child needs extra support allow them to sit on the bottom step, against a wall or in the corner of a sofa.
- Always do the task in the same order so it is easier to remember which bit comes next e.g. loosen fastenings, pull shoe open, pull out tongue of shoe, wriggle in foot, readjust tongue and fasten.
- Initially you may need to position the correct shoe by the correct feet. If your child has difficulty putting each shoe on the correct foot you can:
  1. Fix something bright onto one shoe and teach your child 'bright is right'.
  2. Buy shoes with a logo on the outer side.
  3. Hold shoes next to each other before putting them on to see if they are 'friends', that is they 'face' each other.
  4. Place shoes in front of your child in their correct position, so that the left shoe is matching the left foot.
  5. Help your child recognise their left and right shoe by drawing arrows inside the shoes pointing together.

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Potty training and toileting

When children start school, it is important that they can use the toilet independently. They will be expected to wipe their own bottom and understand good hygiene practices.

Some children may struggle with this and support for parents and carers can be found below to help encourage independence.

Help and support can also be offered via your school nursing team.

They can be contacted on 0300 323 0114
SouthsomersetSN@somerset.gov.uk

Hand washing is very important.

Hand-washing technique with soap and water

cleanyourhands campaign

NHS National Patient Safety Agency

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Adapted from World Health Organization *Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care*

Children should be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.

Available downloads to support with night-time wetting and potty training.

ERIC's guide to night-time wetting
https://www.eric.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a6299b43-345d-4860-ab2c-ed139bef6f3e

ERIC's guide to potty training
https://www.eric.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=cad20060-c174-4566-afcd-25f0087614a4

ERIC's thinking about wee and poo now you are on your way to school
https://www.eric.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=10d3b255-11c5-47c0-ac64-1b6c9d33d739

Healthy lunch boxes

All children starting school will be able to receive free school meals. This can be in the form of a packed lunch or a hot meal. You can also choose to prepare your child's own packed lunch if you so wish.

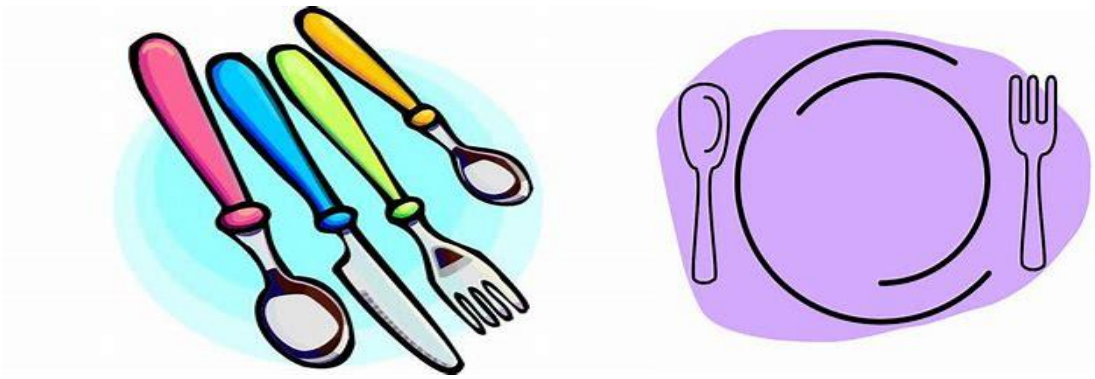
Below are links to healthy alternatives to sugary lunch box snacks and healthy lunch box ideas.

https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes#lunchbox-recipes

https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/food-facts/sugar/sugar-swaps-for-kids

Using a knife and fork at mealtimes enhances children's fine motor skills and hand eye co-ordination. Practising using a knife and fork can be incorporated within role play at home and creative activities.

https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/249111/using-cutlery-information-sheet.pdf



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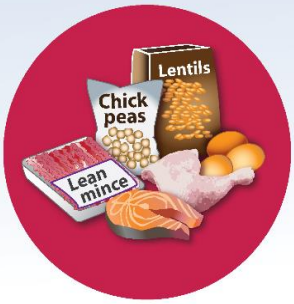
The importance of healthy eating for young children

Eating habits are developed early in life.

A healthy, balanced diet and regular exercise are essential for young children's health and wellbeing.



What is a healthy balanced diet?

Young children need a healthy, balanced diet based on the four food groups, which provide the nutrients to help them grow and develop.

The four food groups:

1. Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates
2. Fruit and vegetables
3. Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
4. Dairy and alternatives

Almost one in four children are overweight or obese before they start school. Obese children are more likely to become obese adults, who are more likely to develop a range of health issues.

HM Government

Example menus for early years settings in England can be found **www.gov.uk**

Oral health 3-6 years

Toothbrushing tips

It's important to use a fluoride toothpaste, as this helps prevent and control tooth decay.

Children aged 3 to 6 years

- Brush at least twice daily for about 2 minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush last thing at night before bed and at least on 1 other occasion.
- Brushing should be supervised by a parent or carer.
- Use children's fluoride toothpaste containing no less than 1,000ppm of fluoride (check label) or family toothpaste containing between 1,350ppm and 1,500ppm fluoride.
- Use only a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- Spit out after brushing and don't rinse – if you rinse, the fluoride won't work as well.

Pea-sized blob of toothpaste

How to help children brush their teeth properly

- Guide your child's hand so they can feel the correct movement.
- Use a mirror to help your child see exactly where the brush is cleaning their teeth.
- Make tooth brushing as fun as possible by using an egg timer to time it for about 2 minutes. You could also try the Brush DJ timer app listed on our Apps Library.
- Don't let children run around with a toothbrush in their mouth, as they may have an accident and hurt themselves.

NHS

SOMERSET County Council

CORONAVIRUS

Fact sheet for kids

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS?

A coronavirus is a type of virus. Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new strain of coronavirus, which means no-one has caught it before and our bodies are not immune (protected) from it yet. It spreads very quickly and is making a lot of people poorly at the moment.

HOW DOES A VIRUS WORK?

1. Your body is made up of millions of tiny cells.
2. Viruses can't survive outside the body for long, so they try to get into our cells.
3. When viruses get inside our cells, we get infected.
4. Once a cell is 'infected', the virus multiplies and can spread around the body.
5. Our body produces antibodies that fight the virus and help us get better.

HM Government

NHS

CORONAVIRUS
STAY ALERT TO THE SYMPTOMS

HIGH TEMPERATURE
OR NEW CONTINUOUS COUGH
OR LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL?

No one in your household should leave home if any one person has symptoms.

Find out how to get a test, and how long to isolate, at **nhs.uk/coronavirus**

STAY ALERT › CONTROL THE VIRUS › SAVE LIVES

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