

Independence

Activities and Ideas to try at home

Independence can be broken down into a few areas; Eating and drinking, personal care skills, dressing & undressing and staying safe. You will know your child's level and ability as to what ideas below are appropriate. If you're unsure on specifics you could look back at your child's last EHCP review under 'Independence'. This is to be used in conjunction with the specific 'step' guidance also available.

Eating & Drinking:

- Encourage your child to try new foods or textures. If they aren't too sure, just let them play with it initially, you eat some, feed some to a sibling or a teddy. Explore it by touching it, smelling it, splatting it. If they are keen; keep trying new foods that are; spicy, sweet, warm, cool, crunchy, soft.
- Encourage your child to eat their own meal using cutlery; whether that be a spoon, a fork or a knife and fork. They may need you to load the spoon or fork for them and then see if they can take it to their mouth. If they can do this then encourage them to feed themselves, the next step is to see if they can cut any of their food.
- There's a whole range of different types of cutlery available, some are angled to the left or the right, have a rubber grip or are thicker to help grasp easier. Take a look online or feel free to ask your child's class team for more information.
- Even if you know what your child wants; try asking them what they want - use their method of communication e.g. symbols, photos, Makaton, speech and see what they ask for. You can limit their response by showing them what items are on offer. You could do this at the same time each day for snack for example at 10:00.
- Encourage your child to drink from their suitable cup (Ensure you follow speech and therapy and safety guidelines), but if they can drink from an open cup, encourage this. Can they pour their own drink? Just put a little bit of water or squash in a small jug and get them to have a



go! Maybe they could pour some for you or their siblings?

- There are a range of cups available that help the development of drinking, some are kapi or doidy cups and are angled so that you can see how much liquid is coming out of them.

.....Keep reading for more ideas....

Personal Care skills

- Washing our hands- Encourage your child to wash their hands with soap and water. If your child is not able to reach or access the sink, you could use a bowl, flannels, a shallow tray. Encourage them to put their hands in and model rubbing your hands together. Same for drying- if your child is able to do this you could give them a choice and ask 'What do we need to dry our hands?', give the choice of a towel or a toothbrush for example.
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- Brushing teeth- Sing 'This is the way we brush our teeth' or songs such as- Hey Duggee tooth brush song-



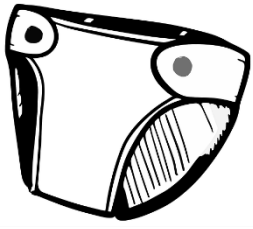
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your child to have a go themselves if they're able to, if they don't tolerate having their teeth brushed try singing the song, looking in the mirror at the same time, you could try an electric toothbrush. (On Twinkl search 'Teeth brushing' and there are sequence cards you could print.)



- Having nappy/pad changed or using the toilet. When changing your child's nappy try linking with their communication e.g. by telling them, by showing a symbol or photo of the place where you change them or maybe of the nappy or use Makaton. If your child can get the nappy/pad/pants- ask them to get it, you could sing the same song when you change their nappy or you could talk about what you can see. Encourage them to pull their trousers/skirt down/up etc- not just for children using the toilet but those that have their nappy changed too.
- Brushing hair- This can be a tricky one for some children. If your child is not able to physically brush their hair then you can brush it for them, maybe trialling a few different brushes e.g. comb, soft brush, your hair brush, their hairbrush. For some children you could brush opposite a mirror, try brushing dolls hair or they could try and brush your hair. Make it part of their routine e.g. after our bath we brush our hair.
- Bath time- . You could try bath time games such as tipping and pouring, stacking, bath foam, bubbles in the bath, blow bubbles and pop them, encourage your child to blow bubbles, you could have relaxing music playing or upbeat fun songs. Sing; 5 little ducks (& use the ducks), 5 little speckled frogs, it's raining it's pouring and row row row your boat.



.....Keep reading for more ideas....

Dressing and undressing skills

- Encourage your child to undress and dress themselves as much as they can, this will vary depending on your child. It could be encouraging them to pull an arm or leg out of the arm hole or leg hole on clothes. It could be encouraging them to put their coat on before going in the garden or it could be practising poppers, zips and buttons. If you are practising fastenings you could try them practising on a piece of clothing that is not being worn by them as this can be harder. Take a cardigan or coat and put it on the floor or on a small chair and teach them how to do it.
- Practising putting socks on and taking them off- to make this more fun, you could do a messy play foot activity for them to explore and then a foot bath or a foot spa after! Put socks on your feet too- play at pulling them off! Turn it into a game and pretend they smell! Say 'Ooooooh smelly!'.

- Encourage your child to put their coat in a particular place once taken it off if they independently take it off. We know lots of children will drop it on the floor- maybe create a box or a peg in which their coat needs to go every time. This helps children learn that their personal belongings need to be respected and have a place. (Also helps keep your home tidier!)
- If your child is able to play with dolls and role play- Practise putting clothes on and off dolls and teddies, naming the clothing items as you do so.
- Play with hats, caps, sunglasses, wellies, sandals, scarves, oversized jumpers, headbands, bracelets/bangles (All with direct supervision of course). Play putting them on each other's heads, looking in the mirror, taking selfies!
 - Before getting dressed; talk out loud about the weather in basic terms e.g. it is sunny or hot today so we need to wear.... Or it is cold or raining today so we should wear...



.....Keep reading for more ideas....

Staying Safe and being healthy

All of our children as you know have little awareness of danger, therefore although we are with them all of the time, it is also important to teach them about safety, especially for some of our more able children.

Practical ideas about safety at home;

- Tidy up at the end of an activity or end of a day - encourage your child to put toys in a box, this helps keep a clearer space which means less falls.
- Encourage your child to 'help' if they want to carry items by showing them how to hold bigger toys.
- When on a walk for exercise; encourage them to stop and look before crossing.



• Do the Joe Wicks exercise (Online) or another exercise video or make your own e.g. 10 jumps, run and touch the garden wall, kick a ball then jump x 10 again. BUT then talk about why they are hot- e.g. it means they are exercising and working hard, which makes us healthy.

- Do a healthy and unhealthy food activity- Make a lunchbox and give choices of food, talk about healthy and unhealthy choices e.g. crisps or carrot sticks, apple or chocolate, fizzy drink or water.

Massage & Touch

Massage and touch is important for many reasons, for some children it may be learning the difference between nice touch for massage rather than for 'being cleaned' or for 'being changed' or for 'medical reasons'. It creates a nice activity between adult and child. It can also be calming and relaxing, can improve circulation and can help your child be still, calmer and relaxed for a few minutes which may support their mind in being healthy.

- Put music on that is calming or relaxing. Nice relaxing music that we sometimes use at school is ; Disney relaxing music or Disney piano music on youtube. Use baby oil or a SAFE oil that you KNOW your child does not react to. If your child has sensitive skin or allergies please only use an oil or cream that you have previously tested. Now is not the time to try new creams or oils. Then set out an area, maybe in the same place that you would like to do this each time. You could put down a blanket, take off either their top or trousers or both, leaving their nappy or pants on, however ensure the room is warm enough. Then massage your child, you could do just hands or just feet or their whole body. Remember they'll likely be slippy after- so have a towel ready. Use a firm but not too firm touch, sometimes too light can be tickly- so have a try and see what they seem to like the most.

