

## Personal care

Sighted hearing children get lots of information about personal care routines such as washing, dressing and toileting. They see, hear and smell nappies and wipes being got ready, water running, bubbles from bubble bath and much more.

Deafblind children, in contrast, may get little warning of what is about to happen. Personal care routines may be confusing or frightening for them. They may resist or withdraw from the situation.

Toilet training is likely to take longer for children who are multi-sensory-impaired, and for some children with additional disabilities, bowel and bladder control may not occur. Most children can, however, learn to co-operate in these routines. This becomes increasingly important for the carer as the child become older and heavier.

Many children are interested in their own bodily fluids and faeces. For deafblind children, this interest may last much longer and present a problem.

## Approaches that may help

- Follow the [key approaches for deafblind children](#) - building trust, being consistent, helping understanding, taking time, following the child and being supportive
- Tell your child what is about to happen. Indicate the stages of dressing through touch (for example, 'this is going over your head'). Use touch, verbal and/or signed cues when your child needs to be lifted
- As with all children, start toilet training when your child is dry for longer periods and seems more aware of what is happening. Many children who are multi-sensory-impaired feel insecure in space and may not like sitting on a potty or toilet. Make sure that your child's feet are supported on the floor or a step, and that s/he has something (initially an adult) to hold on to
- Bathrooms smell different from other rooms, and often echo. Some deafblind children find this interesting, and may experiment with sounds; others find it frightening. Bathrooms need to be made friendly (perhaps with scented soap and relaxing music), especially for children who become anxious there
- If children's behaviour is socially unacceptable, try to understand why. Check for any new physical or medical problems. Is the behaviour linked to particular states, such as boredom or discomfort when wet or soiled? Does the adult's response reinforce the behaviour?
- For young children, all-in-one sleep suits may stop them removing nappies and playing with faeces. For older children, dungaree-style sleep suits can be made (the arms and neck need to be quite high).
- Praise positive responses and acknowledge if your child does not want to do something. Even if the activity has to happen, show that you understand the child's feelings. Try to stay relaxed.

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