

# Self-Care at School

April 8, 2015

## What self-care skills are important at school?

Self-care skills include those activities we do on a daily basis to take care of ourselves such as dressing, bathing, personal hygiene, and feeding. As you read in our last newsletter, occupational therapy in the school focuses on increasing students' independence in the school environment.

- ⇒ Putting on and taking off a backpack or jacket
- ⇒ Managing fasteners such as buttons, zippers, & snaps
- ⇒ Completing tasks to prepare for and complete lunchtime. (carrying a lunch tray, using utensils, opening, closing and cleaning up lunch items)
- ⇒ Following hygiene routines such as hand washing and toileting

All of these skills are important to have for the school day. An occupational therapist can help with improving fine motor, motor coordination, motor planning, and visual perceptual skills to support children's success in carrying out these tasks.



## Self-care and Self-esteem

The authors of a recent research article explained that children's psychological self-concept is a factor that is predictive of their activity participation (Goltz & Brown, 2014).

Authors of a different research study explained their findings that children with coordination deficits participated less in motor activities and scored sig-

nificantly lower than typically developing children in the area of self-efficacy. "The lower the [the child's] self-efficacy, the lower their motor performance and their preference to participate in activities" (Engel-Yeger & Kasis, 2010).



Goltz, H. & Brown, T. (2014). "Are children's psychological self-concepts predictive of their self reported activity preferences and leisure participation?" *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 61 (3), 177-186. Doi: 10.1111/1440-1630.12101

Engel-Yeger, . & Kasis, . (2010). "The relationship between Developmental Coordination Disorder, Child's perceived self-efficacy and preference to participate in daily activities". *Child Care Health Development*, 36(5),670-7. Doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2010.01073.x

## Learning Through Play!

1. Attach a button to a piece of ribbon. Then cut slits in felt or foam shapes to make a buttoning snake.



2. Obtain a container with a lid (butter, yogurt, etc.), cut a slit in the center of the lid large enough only for a button to fit through. Have child put button/coins through the slit.

3. Use a spoon or measuring cups to scoop rice, beans, marbles, etc. from one bin and then transfer it to another bin. Hide objects in the bin so they have to dig to find them.



4. Play dressing games like this one: Throw all different types of clothing in a laundry basket (hats,

gloves, shirts, jackets, shorts, pants, shoes, socks, backpack, etc.).

Make up 6 cards, each with a drawing or picture of a body part on it. Each person picks a card on their turn and has to find a garment in the basket that dresses that body part. Then they have to put it on.

5. Place items in Hungry Guy's mouth while palming several items in your palm. (see [instructions](#))

## Tips & Tricks

Practice, Practice, and more Practice!

### Video Links

- ◆ [“Kids learn how to tie their shoes easily”](#)
- ◆ [“The Alligator Chomp”](#)
- ◆ [“Buttoning Skills”](#)
- ◆ [“In-Hand manipulation exercises”](#)
- ◆ [“The Pocket OT... Fine Motor Coordination”](#)

- ◆ **Use pictures** of each step of the task such as putting on a jacket. Capture putting one arm in, wrapping it around, other arm in, latching zipper, and when it's complete.
- ◆ **Model the steps.** Let them observe you before asking them to attempt the task.
- ◆ **Place garments in front of them** to practice before learning to fasten on their own body.
- ◆ **Break down tasks** into smaller steps so the student can be successful.
- ◆ **Use large buttons and zippers** to start. Then move to

smaller fasteners once they have mastered the large.

- ◆ **Provide play opportunities** to improve fine motor skills. Use play-doh, tongs, Q-tips, clothespins, finger plays. Look online for other ideas!
- ◆ **Encourage “alligator fingers”** to “chomp” at the fasteners. Using thumb and first two fingers only.
- ◆ **Use adaptive equipment** to support independence. There are a variety of tools available: utensils, cups, straws, plates, positioning devices. Ask one of our occupational therapists!