

## **Helping my child**

### **1. How do I help my child to drink in a cup or glass instead of bottle?**

- Before introducing a cup or glass, it is important for the child to be familiar with a cup or glass.
- Let him explore cup/glass during bath time by filling them with water. Let the child feel some one else also drinks from a glass.
- Start with a firm plastic glass filled with a small amount of liquid. There should be enough liquid so that the child doesn't have to tilt his head way back to drink.
- From behind the child guide him to pick up the glass, help him take a small sip and then place it back on the table. Gradually withdraw the amount of assistance until the child can do this independently without spilling.
- Then gradually increase the amount of liquid in the glass. Initially give familiar but thickened liquids like lassi, milkshakes etc. At the same time reduce the amount of liquid he gets from the bottle and over the span of a couple of weeks cut down the number of drinks from bottles.
- Always say and sign "drink" before handing over the cup or glass to the child. If your child has a problem closing his mouth and swallowing, sit to one side of the child putting an arm around him, to help him control his jaw and lips and hold the glass with the other hand.

### **2. My 4 year old daughter still doesn't chew her food instead she just swallows it?**

- Firstly make the child sit in a comfortable position.
- If sitting on the chair make sure her feet are on the floor so that the child feels secured. Sit beside her and take a bite of food. Place her hands on your face and chew in an exaggerated way.
- Now give her a bite of food. Once the food is inside her mouth, her mouth should remain closed. It may be necessary to hold her lips together while gently massaging her jaws, to give her the chewing motion.
- Talk to your Physiotherapist for advice on jaw movements.
- Up and down tongue movement is necessary for good chewing. The tongue should lift the food and put it on the teeth's surface to be chewed again each time the teeth come together.
- To stimulate tongue movement, place the food on alternate sides of her tongue while pressing the spoon against her tongue.
- Semi solid foods are best when teaching the child to chew. Paneer, boiled egg, ripe banana are all good to use.
- Start with the child's favorite food. Always say and sign "eat" before every bite. Eating along with the child will make meal time fun!

### **3. My two year old child only eats khichdi and drinks milk. How do I introduce new food items to the child?**

- Initially start by adding some different food items along with your child's favorite food; it could be boiled vegetables or fruits.
- When introducing solid food, let the child explore the food, name the food and make the child smell it. Let him taste a little of the food from his finger or put a small amount in his mouth after touching his mouth.
- Keep offering a little of the same food for a few days. Be patient and do not force feed the child. Help the child understand where the food comes from and how it is prepared.
- If the child likes fruit help the child feel the whole fruit, then help him peel it, slice it and put it in a bowl. Always let the child touch, smell, mash, lick, drop or explore the food.

- Take the child shopping and allow him to choose. Give him the experience of different smells, textures, varying weights, frozen food etc.
- Start with new food item one at a time.

#### **4. How do I teach my child to eat independently?**

- It is important to have a consistent routine for feeding, always place the utensils in the same place.
- Make sure the child is comfortably seated and as the child develops feeding skills no matter how small. Praise the child and encourage him/her.
- Be prepared for a mess as the child begins to learn feeding skills. Before the child can finger feed she should be able to hold up her head, hold food in her mouth, chew and swallow.
- Always start with the child's favorite food.
- Place the food in front of her, coactively sign, "eat" and name the food. Let her touch and feel. Help her pick up the food and gently guide her hand to her mouth. Gradually give her less and less help.
- Once the child can finger feed herself you can introduce spoon. When introducing spoon, stand along with the child. Put her hand over your hand and help her find the spoon. Keep her hand over your hand as you scoop the food and guide the spoon to her mouth.
- Always use a deep bowl or a dish with sides when introducing a spoon.

#### **5. My child clamps his mouth shut when I try to brush his teeth?**

- When introducing brushing it may be necessary to start without toothpaste. Children often dislike the taste of toothpaste instead you can use some honey.
- Include him in buying a toothbrush. Show him how each member of the family brush their teeth every morning and night.
- Mark his toothbrush with a tape or thread and keep it at a particular place.
- When doing the activity place yourself behind the child, when you are in this position it is easier for the child to feel the movements of your hands and arms and to imitate the movement. Coactively sign "brush" and "teeth".
- Assist the child in putting the toothpaste on the brush, wet the toothbrush and gently insert it in his mouth. Brush the teeth using circular motions. Rinse the toothbrush and place it back.
- Help the child rinse his mouth Communicate to the child throughout the activity using consistent signs/cues. It may be interesting to sing a particular song or play a touch-tap game during brushing everyday.

#### **6. How do I teach my child to wash his face?**

- Firstly sign and say, "Wash face". Help the child make the sign
- Take the child to the sink and sign "water". Place his hands over your hands and help him open the tap.
- Place the child's hand under the tap and let him feel the running water. Without any soap and with your hands over his help him to wash his face. Now sign "soap" and with your hands over his help him apply soap on his face.
- Be careful to keep the soap out of his eyes. Again sign "wash face" and rinse the soap from his hands and help him rinse the soap off his face.
- After his face is clean sign "finished" and help him turn the tap off. Help him locate the towel and wipe his face.

#### **7. My son does not like to put his shoes on?**

- Always buy shoes which the child can get into easily and remove them, preferably opt for slip-ons or Velcro closures.

- Try and involve the child in the selection of the shoes. Choose shoes, which have bright colors, patterns, and textures or have some sound (depending on age).
- Show him that every one wears shoes. Play with shoes, act like you are wearing his shoes, and make him wear his fathers or brother's shoes, put shoes on a doll.
- Try putting on his shoes when he is going out for his favorite activity like going for a drive or going to the park.

#### **8. How do I teach my daughter to start dressing herself?**

- Whenever you dress or undress her always talk about what you are doing, about her clothes, the texture, colours, the names of the body parts.
- Let her feel the article of clothing before you put it on, show her the difference between front and back, buttons, pockets or any clue that would help her.
- Follow a consistent pattern of dressing so that the child can learn to anticipate the next step.
- When you first start teaching her how to dress or undress begin by asking her to help you. For example "I am going to put your shirt on, stretch your arm out". Making your child do small things while dressing or undressing makes her participate in the activity instead of everything being done for her.
- Gradually decrease the help you give to your child. She will be able to undress herself before she can dress herself, because it is easier.
- When the child is dressing name the piece of clothing and the different parts such as collar, sleeves etc. Be sure to choose clothes that are easy to wear or remove.
- Clothes, which have elastic waistbands, zips or Velcro fasteners are easier to put on.

#### **9. When do I start 'toilet training' for my child?**

- You can start toilet training when your child has developed bladder and bowel control.
- If your child stays dry for a longer period of time during the day and has a regular pattern of elimination also the child should have head control and body balance to sit on a potty.
- If your child shows signs of discomfort in his wet nappy or underwear then the child is ready for toilet training.
- When you start toilet training always use consistent language, techniques and procedures. Try and observe and note the frequency and times of his or her bladder and bowel movement.
- Keep a schedule of the child's toilet habits for at least a week.
- Try and take him to the toilet just before he needs to go. Always sign and say "toilet" before taking him. Don't keep the child in diapers during daytime. I
- If you are using a potty chair keep it in the bathroom. Stay with the child in the bathroom and praise him when he cooperates.
- Don't scold the child if he has an accident, just take him to the bathroom and sign "wet" and change his underpants.
- Have a fixed place to go every time.

#### **10. My two-year-old daughter refuses to sit on a potty chair?**

- Take your child to the toilet and demonstrate how it is done. Show your child the toilet and orient her to the bathroom.
- Keep her potty chair next to the toilet. Decorate the potty chair with a few toys and make sure the chair is firm and comfortable.
- Make sure her feet are flat on the ground and she is well supported when sitting on the chair. If the chair is high, place something under her feet.
- Praise her when she sits on the chair and reward her immediately. Do not keep her longer than 10 minutes. If she refuses to sit on a chair try and use a potty seat that fits on a regular toilet but make sure she has a footrest.

- Try to ensure the child is not constipated as pain will not let her relax. Increase her fluid intake and add more fibrous foods in her diet.
- Have a fixed time and a fixed place.

#### **11. How can I make my baby enjoy his bath?**

- Bathing can be a wonderful experience for a child. During this activity you can give the child numerous experiences. Always have a sequence so the child learns to anticipate the events.
- Start the activity by saying or signing “bath time” take the child to the bathroom make him pick up his soap and let him smell it at this time you can teach him to recognize his soap by showing him the shape, size and smell of the soap- (if possible take the child to the market and let him choose his own soap). Sign or say, “Lets take off your clothes”
- As you undress the child speak about the activity and let him assist in undressing.
- Open the tap, keep telling the child what you are doing if he can open the tap let him do so. Let the child feel the water running and make him feel the water in the bucket or the tub as it fills. Gently make him sit down. Always let him assist you throughout the activity. Sign the names of the body parts as you wash them. Help him hold the soap and then rub the soap. (If the soap slips from his hand you can stick a bottle cap on the soap)
- Keep some bath toys in the tub or bucket, let him explore the toys. You can teach him skills like squeezing, pouring. Give him different size and shaped containers. You can give him a small towel for him to squeeze and rub himself with. Let him play for a while, keep signing and talking to him match actions and descriptive words e.g. pour or splash.
- Take turns, pour and let him pour, splash and let him splash. Watch when the child is tired and respond appropriately.
- When the bath is coming to an end, let the child know that it is time to get up. Involve him in picking up the toys and putting them away. Let the child feel the towel, let him rub his parts of the body that he can. Let him feel the clean clothes and dress him with his cooperation.

#### **12. How can I teach my child to walk?**

- Once your child can stand make your child stand next to a sofa or a bed. Show him a toy, which he likes and keep it a few inches away from him.
- Help him move sideways towards the toy. Take his feet and slide them one at a time in the direction of the toy.
- Slide his hands along the same direction as he moves. Next stand behind the child and support him by placing your hands under his armpits. Provide maximum body contact. Help him move forward.
- When your child no longer needs full body support move to the front and support the child with two hands at the waist.
- Next stand in front of the child and hold both his hands move backwards while you are facing the child. Try not to lift his arms to high above his chest. Encourage him to take a few steps, keep praising him. Let the child walk holding on to a stroller or let him push a chair around. When the child can take a few steps holding on to something encourage him to let go. Stretch out your arms towards him and call him.
- Teach the child to walk as a part of an activity, use the activity to motivate the child. Don't hurry up the child. Once your child starts to walk holding on to your hand make sure that you don't pull the child but walk at the child's speed.

#### **13. My son has started to walk, how can I teach him to walk independently around the house?**

- Before teaching your son to walk independently try and close your eyes and walk around the house, feel the furniture, the different textures, the smells and get aware of the sensory input from the world around you.

- Think of all the clues you can give him.
- Take your child to all the parts of the house, give him specific directions. Keep the child close to you as you work in different rooms.
- As you cook in the kitchen keep him with you let him be close enough so he can locate you when he wants to.
- Talk to him about and make him touch and explore objects and make him participate in an activity like washing vegetables or sorting utensils or keeping things in the cupboards.
- Keep his belongings in a specific place and encourage him to get objects and keep them back. Initially assist him and slowly let him do the tasks independently.
- Make him participate in house work activities like dusting, sorting clothes, setting the table. Let him participate as a member of the family and taking responsibility.
- The more active the child is at home, the easier it will be for him to be independent.

**14. My daughter sleeps most of the day and stays awake at night. I have tried everything but nothing helps?**

- Young children with deafblindness may have difficulty-distinguishing day from night. As a result making the child sleep at night becomes a difficult task.
- It is important to have a fixed schedule from morning to night. Create definite differences between day and night.
- When the child wakes up in the morning, communicate to him it is time to get up. Feed her breakfast and dress her up.
- Keep the morning routine consistent and different from the night routine. The night routine should include calm and relaxing activities.
- The child can be given a warm bath, dressed in his night clothes, brush her teeth, read to or make her listen to some soft music.
- Cuddle the child if she likes to be rocked than do so. Don't feed your child in the middle of the night.
- If she is used to a bottle than give her water instead of milk. Slowly try and stop the bottle altogether.

**15. Whenever we give our son any object like spoon or toy all he does is bang it on everything?**

- Children have their own ways of enjoying play! Encourage the child to explore and manipulate the objects.
- Initially you will have to show him how to manipulate objects. For example you can build a tower of beakers/glasses and make him knock it down.
- Slowly ask him to place one beaker and you knock it down. Make the activity brief and interesting. Repeat the activity as often as possible. This will help him anticipate and recognize the objects.
- Observe if the child is attempting to imitate the activity If s/he is attempting to, than respond to him appropriately. Make sure that the objects you give him have interesting textures, shapes, are brightly colored and toys that spin, roll or make sounds. You can also give him toys to redirect his banging impulse like a drum or a toddler hammer.
- Don't try and stop him from banging or throwing the toys but engage him in some pther activities by making interesting things happen while he watches, by moving his hands through activities by briefly allowing him to bang and then showing him other ways to use it.

**16. How can I encourage my child to sit unsupported?**

- Initially make him sit on your lap play with him, talk to him, dress and feed him. He may begin to realize that for all his activities when he gets special attention he sits.

- As soon as he has some degree of head control, prop him up firmly in the corner of a sofa and support him with pillows on either side.
- Let him sit like this for short periods of time but frequently. Don't leave him in the same place, move him around to different rooms and offer him some sort of stimulation.
- For a child to sit unsupported he must be able to use his arms and legs to balance himself.
- To help him understand the use of his hands to support himself you can do the following activities.
  - You can make him sit cross-legged and let him lean forward on his hands with your help.
  - Gently rock him from side to side on to each hand as he is sitting supported.
  - Sit with your legs straight opposite him and hold his hands. Rock back and forth holding hands.

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