

Supporting People with Down Syndrome in Managing their Personal Hygiene

Adult Down Syndrome Center

December 12, 2024 | Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L





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Reminders

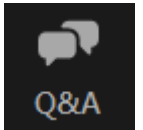
This webinar will be recorded.

The slides will be shared.

- Links to the recording and slides will be emailed to attendees and posted in our Resource Library within 1 week.

Q&A

- Please submit questions using the Q&A option.



Disclaimer

This information is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for a medical, psychiatric, mental health, or behavioral evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment plan by a qualified professional.

Neither Katie nor Advocate Health endorses any of the products mentioned in this presentation.



Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L

Objectives

- Understand the progression of assistance when it comes to supporting an individual with Down syndrome
- Identify **what** personal hygiene skills need to be learned
- Describe **how** we can support individuals with Down syndrome complete personal hygiene management more independently

Progression of assistance

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



Full
assistance

Maximal
assistance

Moderate
assistance

Minimal
assistance

Prompts

Supervision

No
assistance

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



**Full
assistance**

- Need 100% physical support

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence

**Maximal
assistance**

- Person requires 75% physical support and can complete 25% of the task on their own.
- Adaptive equipment or durable medical equipment may be used by caregiver.

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



Moderate
assistance

- Person requires 50% physical support and can complete 50% of the task on their own.
- May use modifications or adaptations.
- Caregiver may need durable medical equipment for safety.

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



**Minimal
assistance**

- Person requires 25% physical support and can complete 75% of the task on their own.
- Hand over hand or hand under hand assistance.
- Providing set-up.
- May also use modifications or adaptations.

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



Prompts

- Modeling
- Gestures
- Verbal
- Visual

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



- Able to complete task on their own but requires supervision for safety.
- May also use modifications or adaptations.

Supervision

Progression of assistance

Dependence

Independence



- Able to complete task 100% on their own, even if modifications or adaptations are put into place

No
assistance

How individuals with Down syndrome learn best

How individuals with DS learn

- Visual learners and do well learning from someone that looks like them.
 - Pair pictures with spoken word.
- Require simple directions.
 - Say what to do instead of what not to do.
- Are not as strong with auditory memory and auditory processing and have difficulty retaining directions or information that is only presented verbally.
 - Allow adequate response time.
- Have fewer short-term memory channels.
 - Break down directions into smaller steps.
- Need to have a regulated sensory system
 - Provide sensory input

It depends on the individual's...

- Preferences
- Abilities
- Motivating factors/goals
- Living situation
- Learning style

What works for most?

- Visuals and videos
- Modeling
- Repetition
- Practice
- Social support
- Being as concrete as possible
- Establishing a routine

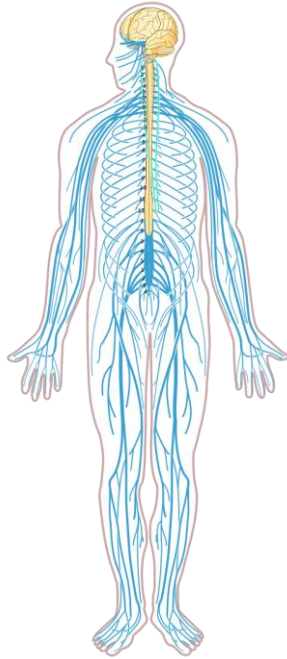
Activity analysis/Task analysis

- Breaking task down into its individual steps.
 - Example- getting dressed
 - Gather new/clean clothes
 - Remove old/dirty clothes
 - Put on undergarments
 - Dress lower body
 - Pants/shorts/skirt
 - Socks and shoes
 - Upper body dressing
 - Shirt

Using visual supports to help learn

- Visual supports help to provide/establish structure and routine.
- Provide memory and comprehension strategies to support independence.
- Lessen the battle between parent/caregiver and person with I/DD.
- Help teach/show what to do.
- Can provide motivation.
- Provides opportunity to offer choices.
- Eliminates need to process instructions auditorily.

Our sensory system



Our sensory system



Our sensory system



The kink may impact behavior.

We may see...

- Verbal outbursts
- Physical aggression
- Slowing down
- Shutting down























Personal hygiene





What is personal hygiene

- How you care for your body
- Important because
 - People will want to be around us
 - Helps with independence
 - Helps stay healthy



PERSONAL HYGIENE CHART

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
take bath or shower 							
brush teeth 							
wash face 							
use deodorant 							
use lotion 							
brush hair 							
shave 							
nail care 							

My outfit should... 	be clean 	match 	be okay for the weather 
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[Personal Hygiene Chart | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://advocatehealth.com)

Brushing teeth challenges













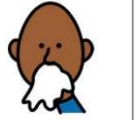

- Not wanting to do it
- Not liking the feel of it
- Not liking the taste of toothpaste
- Not able to clean teeth thoroughly
- Decreased fine motor skills
- Too many steps to follow
- Use too much or too little toothpaste

Strategies and tips for brushing teeth and flossing
















- Use an electric toothbrush, 3-sided toothbrush, or pediatric size toothbrush
- Have a playlist in order to brush long enough
- Use a visual support to remember each step
- Flossing—water piks or floss picks
- Mouthwash in addition to, not instead of
- Automatic toothpaste dispenser



Brushing Teeth

 Get toothbrush and toothpaste	 Turn on water	 Get toothbrush wet	 Put toothpaste on toothbrush	 I will be gentle
 Brush bottom teeth all sides	 Spit out toothpaste	 Brush top teeth all sides	 Spit out toothpaste	 Rinse out mouth
 Rinse toothbrush	 Turn off water	 Wipe mouth	 Put away toothbrush and toothpaste	

Brushing Teeth

 Get toothbrush and toothpaste	 Turn on water	 Get toothbrush wet	 Turn off water	 Put toothpaste on toothbrush
 Brush bottom teeth all sides	 Spit out toothpaste	 Brush top teeth all sides	 Spit out toothpaste	 Turn on water
 Rinse out mouth	 Rinse toothbrush	 Turn off water	 Wipe mouth	 Put away toothbrush and toothpaste



[How to Brush Your Teeth \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Toilet hygiene challenges

- Difficulty with toilet training
- Unable to wipe bottom thoroughly or at all
- Difficulty sequencing toileting routine
- Too distracted to use the toilet
- Using too much or too little toilet paper

Strategies for good toilet hygiene

- Moist wipes



- Check in the mirror



- Toilet aid



- Use a bidet



[Toilet Hygiene | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com/adult-down-syndrome-center)

Teaching how to wipe



**Using the Toilet
Boys/Men**

Go into bathroom and close the door 	Pull down pants and underwear 	Sometimes I pee in the toilet 	I can stand or sit when I pee 	Sometimes I poop in the toilet
I will sit when I poop 	Wipe bottom with toilet paper after pooping 	Put used, dirty toilet paper in toilet 	Wipe until the toilet paper is clean 	Put used, clean toilet paper in the toilet
flush the toilet 	pull up underwear and pants 	wash hands 	dry hands 	

Going to the bathroom

I go poop in the toilet.
I will use toilet paper to wipe my butt.
I wipe all the way back here.
This toilet paper is dirty.
I wipe until the toilet paper is clean.
This toilet paper is clean!
I may need to wipe 4 times.
Now I can flush the toilet and pull up my pants.

**Using the Toilet
Girls/Women**

Go into bathroom and close the door 	Pull down pants and underwear 	Sit on toilet 	Sometimes I pee in the toilet 	Sometimes I poop in the toilet
I will wipe my private areas from front to back 	Wipe bottom with toilet paper 	Drop used, dirty toilet paper in toilet 	Wipe until the toilet paper is clean 	Drop used, clean toilet paper in the toilet
Flush the toilet 	Pull up underwear and pants 	Wash hands 	Dry hands 	

Showering challenges

- Not wanting to take a bath or shower
- Too many steps to remember
- Not cleaning thoroughly
- Taking too long of showers
- Just stand in the shower and let water run
- Assistance needed with shampoo, conditioner, and soap dispensers
- Not lathering shampoo in hair or rinsing thoroughly
- Not wanting water or soap etc. on face
- Not able to control water temperature
- Difficulty getting into or out of the tub
- Decreased endurance standing in shower

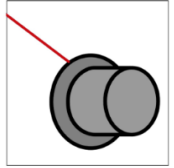
Strategies for showering

- Use visual supports
- Timers or playlists
- Wear goggles or visors to keep water out of eyes/off face
- Use pump bottles for shampoo, conditioner, and body wash
- Long handled sponge or loofah
- Fogless mirror
- Use a plastic cup to rinse hair
- Use tear-free shampoo or 3 in 1 soap

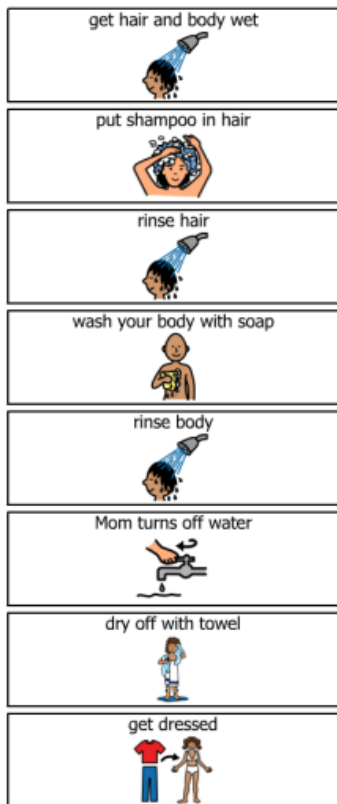


Strategies for showering

- Label hot and cold faucets with pictures or if single faucet, mark with nail polish
- Use a shower head that changes color based on water temperature
- Consider medical equipment like handheld shower head, shower chair, transfer tub bench, or grab bars
- Comb shampoo through hair to spread it evenly or use a scalp scrubber
- Put a picture on the ceiling to work on tilting head back
- Use dry shampoo or a showerless hair washing cap on non-shower days



My Shower Routine



Bathing and Showering Tips

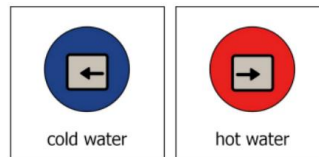
March 2021 | Natalie Rivera, OTS and Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L - Occupational therapy student and occupational therapist

Bathing and showering may be difficult for some individuals with Down syndrome for many reasons. Below are a variety of adaptive strategies and equipment to promote safety and independence with this self-care task.

A long-handled sponge or a washcloth with handles can help individuals clean all areas of their body independently, including those that are hard to reach or not visible.



Placing laminated "hot" and "cold" labels inside your shower can allow individuals to adjust the water temperature with ease and increased safety.



Nail polish or tape can be used to indicate where to turn the shower knob to in order to reach an ideal temperature.

[Create a Showering or Bathing Routine Visual | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com)

[Bathing and Showering Tips | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com)

Grooming challenges

- Not wanting to brush hair
- Not tolerating hair cuts
- Not brushing hair in the back
- Difficulty putting hair into a ponytail
- Not wanting to have nails cut
- Not knowing the steps to shaving
- May not sweat so not wanting or needing to wear deodorant

Strategies for managing hair



Use a clip instead of a scrunchie or hair-tie.

Check the back of your head to make sure it got combed.



[Use a No-pull Brush](#) if you don't like the feeling of combing.

Comb hair when wet.



Tips for Washing and Rinsing Hair in the Shower

February 2021 | Adult Down Syndrome Center -

Some families have shared with us that washing and rinsing hair can be a challenging task for their loved ones with Down syndrome. We have compiled a list of suggestions from families and shared them below. There are strategies that address the whole process as well as strategies that address certain steps that may be difficult.

- Use visuals.
 - Create a visual that shows the steps of washing and rinsing hair.
 - Create a visual that shows how much shampoo/conditioner should be used.
 - Create a visual that identifies all the spots on the head that should be washed and rinsed.
- Play a song or part of a song that is the amount of time that should be spent washing or rinsing.
- Put a mirror in the shower.
- Use bottles with pumps to limit the amount of shampoo/conditioner dispensed.
- Use baby/children's tear-free shampoo. Some people find it helpful to put the shampoo in a bottle without a label or a bottle that is seen as more "adult."
- Explain what rinsed hair feels like ("squeaky clean").
- Encourage your loved one to brush/comb their hair in the shower. This can help get the shampoo/conditioner out and increase rinsing time.
- Laminate a photo of a highly motivating superstar, crush, friend, or athlete. Tape it to the spot on the ceiling at which they should look when they rinse their hair. Encourage them to "talk" to the person while they run their fingers through their hair ten times.
- If possible, use a handheld shower head. It may help the individual have greater control over the direction of the water.
- Put a plastic cup in the shower. Pouring water over the head can help rinse hair more thoroughly and quickly.
- Use a shower visor to keep water off of the face during shampooing.

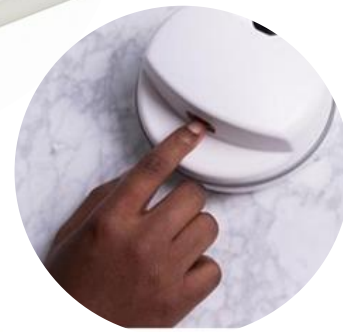




[How to Put Your Hair into a Ponytail \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Strategies for cleaning and cutting your nails

- Clean nails when you wash your hands.
- Cut your nails when they are wet-either after soaking in water or bathing.
- Get a manicure or pedicure.
- Use rotating or automatic nail clippers



[Tips for Cutting Fingernails and Toenails | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com)

TIPS for shaving your face or underarms

- Use an electric razor
- Check your work by looking in a mirror
- Check your work by feeling for hairs
- GO SLOW so you don't get a cut



TIPS for shaving your legs

- Sit down if you can
- Be gentle, don't push hard on the razor
- Shave DOWN your leg
- GO SLOW so you don't get a cut
- Use Nair or other hair remover cream



[How to Shave with an Electric Razor Video | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com)



[How to Shave with an Electric Razor \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Strategies for using deodorant

- Use spray deodorant or stick/roll-on deodorant.
- Use a visual support as reminder.
- Use unscented products
- Use clear or dry clear products
- Visual or model to help know how much to use



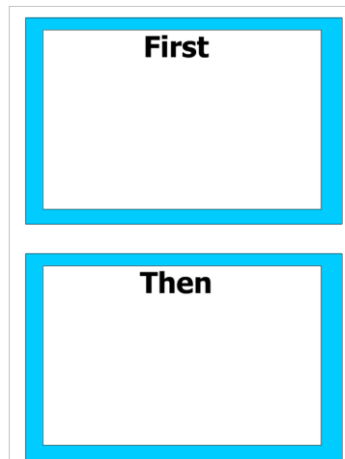
Strategies for washing hands

- Visual supports
 - Videos, pictures
- Timers



Tips for haircuts

- Visit salon first
- Use visual supports
 - Stories, schedule, first/then
- Get your haircut first
- Consider the time of day for the appointment
- Sensory friendly clippers
- Avoid using a blow dryer
- Sensory input before, during, and after
- Use a timer
- Provide distractions



[Tips for a Sensory-Friendly Haircut | Adult Down Syndrome Center \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com)

Dry skin challenges

- Naturally have dry skin
- Do not drink enough water
- Do not like the feeling of lotions or creams

TIPS for taking care of your skin



Use a moisturizing cream daily.



Rub it in until you cannot see it and it is not slippery .



Try a wet or spray lotion if you do not like the feeling of other lotions



Wear gloves if you do not like the feeling of lotion



[Skin_Care.pdf \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com/Skin_Care.pdf)






[Tips on how to manage dry skin \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com)



Lotion Options

I can use lotion or creams to make my dry skin feel better. If lotion or creams do not feel good, I can use other options to help my dry skin!

Some lotion I can use when I have wet skin, like in the shower:

			
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Some lotion I can use as a spray, just like sunscreen:

			
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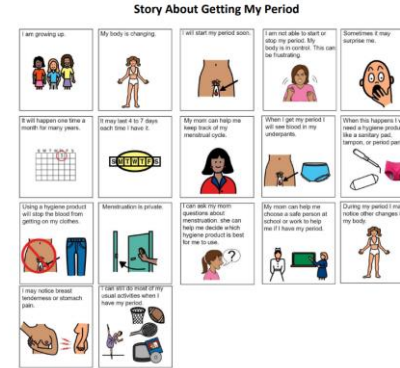
[Lotion Options.pdf \(advocatehealth.com\)](https://www.advocatehealth.com)

Menstrual hygiene management challenges

- Lack fine motor skills to use pads or tampons
- Not knowing when to change menstrual hygiene products
- Not tolerating the sensation of pads or tampons
- Not remembering to remove tampons
- Not knowing when to expect period to begin

Strategies for menstrual hygiene management

- Visual supports
- Period panties
- Timers
- Apps
 - Cycles, Apple Health, Fitbit, Flo



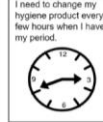
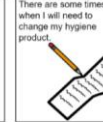









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Story About When to Change My Menstrual Hygiene Product

<p>I have my period.</p> 	<p>I use hygiene products like a sanitary pad in my underwear, a tampon, or period panties when I have my period.</p> 	<p>I need to change my hygiene product every few hours when I have my period.</p> 	<p>There are some times when I will need to change my hygiene product.</p> 
<p>When I wake up in the morning I will use a new hygiene product.</p> 	<p>I will change my hygiene product at lunchtime.</p> 	<p>I will change my hygiene product before dinner.</p> 	<p>Finally, I will change my hygiene product when I get ready for bed.</p> 
<p>Sometimes blood may get on my underwear by accident if I use a pad or tampon. If that happens I will need to change my underwear too!</p> 	<p>I will let my mom know if there is blood in my underwear so she can help me wash it out. I will also need to tell her about my used period panties.</p> 	<p>If I have questions, I can talk to a parent.</p> 	

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Story About How to Change My Tampon

<p>This is how I will change my tampon.</p> 	<p>I will go to the bathroom for privacy.</p> 	<p>I can keep my tampons and clean underwear in a bag so I can bring the supplies to the bathroom with me.</p> 	<p>When I go to the bathroom I will put down my pants and my underwear.</p> 	<p>I will sit on the toilet.</p> 
<p>I will remove my dirty tampon by pulling down on the string.</p> 	<p>I will wrap up the dirty tampon in toilet paper and throw it away in the garbage.</p> 	<p>I will remove the new tampon from the wrapper.</p> 	<p>I will put the applicator in my vagina and push the device to insert the tampon in my vagina.</p> 	<p>I may need to stand up to make it easier to insert.</p> 
<p>I will throw away the used applicator and wringing in the garbage can.</p> 	<p>I will make sure there is no blood on my underwear. If there is, I will need to put on clean underwear.</p> 	<p>I should also use the toilet and wipe to make sure I am clean.</p> 	<p>I will pull up my underwear and pants.</p> 	<p>I will flush the toilet.</p> 
<p>I will take the bag of supplies with me.</p> 	<p>I will wash my hands.</p> 	<p>If I have questions or need help, I can ask a parent.</p> 		

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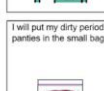
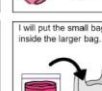

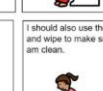




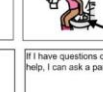
Story About How to Change My Pad

<p>This is how I will change my sanitary pad.</p> 	<p>I will go to the bathroom for privacy.</p> 	<p>I can keep clean pads and underwear in a bag so I can bring the supplies to the bathroom with me.</p> 	<p>When I go to the bathroom, I will put down my pants and my underwear. I will sit on the toilet.</p> 	<p>I will take the dirty pad out of my underwear.</p> 
<p>I will fold it in half so I do NOT see the blood. Then I will wrap it in toilet paper.</p> 	<p>I will throw the pad and toilet paper in the garbage can.</p> 	<p>I will NOT throw it into the toilet.</p> 	<p>I will make sure there is no blood on my underwear. If there is, I will need to put on clean underwear.</p> 	<p>I will get a new, clean sanitary pad out of my bag.</p> 
<p>I will open the wrapper and take the pad out.</p> 	<p>I will remove the paper so I can see the sticky tape.</p> 	<p>I will put the clean pad in my underwear with the sticky side touching my underwear.</p> 	<p>I will make sure the pad sticks to my underwear.</p> 	<p>I can throw the paper away in the garbage can.</p> 
<p>I should also use the toilet and wipe to make sure I am clean.</p> 	<p>I will pull up my underwear and pants.</p> 	<p>I will take my bag of supplies with me when I leave the bathroom.</p> 	<p>I will wash my hands.</p> 	<p>If I have questions or need help, I can ask a parent.</p> 

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Story About How to Change My Period Panties

<p>This is how I will change my period panties.</p> 	<p>I will go to the bathroom for privacy.</p> 	<p>I can keep clean period panties in a bag so I can bring the supplies to the bathroom with me.</p> 	<p>When I go to the bathroom I will pull down my pants and my underwear.</p> 	<p>I will sit on the toilet.</p> 
<p>I will take off my pants and my dirty period panties.</p> 	<p>I will put my dirty period panties in the small bag.</p> 	<p>I will put the small bag inside the larger bag.</p> 	<p>I will take out the new pair of clean period panties and put them on with my pants.</p> 	<p>I should also use the toilet and wipe to make sure I am clean.</p> 
<p>I will stand up and pull up my clean period panties and pants.</p> 	<p>I will flush the toilet.</p> 	<p>I will take the bag of supplies with me.</p> 	<p>I will wash my hands.</p> 	<p>If I have questions or need help, I can ask a parent.</p> 

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Menstruation (Period) Visuals | Adult Down Syndrome Center (advocatehealth.com)

Dressing and clothing selection challenges

- Not able to manipulate fasteners
- Putting clothes on backwards or inside out
- Wearing inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Not tolerating certain clothing fabric
- Changing for gym class

Strategies for dressing and clothing selection

- Clothes without fasteners
- Remove clothing that is not in season
- Label drawers with photo of what is inside
- Visual support for what to wear
- Lay out clothes the night before to save time in the morning
- Clothes without seams and tags
- Use sports bras, front clasp bras, or keep bra fastened and put it on like a t-shirt
- With gym class, do they have to change- consider what steps they have the most difficulty with and try to avoid

Pants Without Fasteners

December 2018

Bimanual dexterity and fine motor skills can be difficult for many individuals with DS, and difficulty with these skills can impact dressing.

There are (stylish) options to promote independence with lower body dressing. Options may:

- Eliminate need for fastening or zipping closures, which may speed up dressing and alleviate frustration
- Provide easy-close alternatives
- Resemble standard pants, jeans, or khakis
- Be available in petite sizes or short lengths

While not an exhaustive list, some examples include:

- Pants with an elastic waist
- Pull-on pants, jeans, or khakis
- Pants with magnetic and/or Velcro closures

*These items may be helpful in search engines or when online shopping

Other brands or helpful terms to search include:

- Tommy Hilfer Adaptive
- MagnaClick brand

Prices, fabrics, and availability vary, although options can be found at many common retailers such as Kohls, Target, Nordstrom, Macy's, and Amazon.

Elastic Waist



Pull-on



Magnetic/Velcro Closure



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Adaptive Shoes

Getting shoes on and off or tying shoelaces can be difficult for many people with DS.

There are options for adaptive shoelaces and shoes to help!

Adaptive Shoelaces:

Elastic Shoelaces

- Replaces standard shoelaces in any lace-up shoe
- Turns lace-up shoes into slip-ons
- Available at many retailers and Amazon (typically between \$5 - \$10)



HICKIES Laces

- Replaces standard laces in any lace-up shoe
- Turns lace-up shoes into slip-ons
- Available at www.hickies.com and Amazon (typically less than \$20)

Zubits Magnetic Closures:

- Attaches to standard laces
- Turns lace-up shoes into slip-ons
- Available on Amazon (typically less than \$20)

Page 1 of 2

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New Way to Learn How to Tie Shoes

Tying shoes can sometimes be challenging for individuals with Down syndrome. We found this new technique that makes tying shoes a little easier!

After putting your shoe on, push the end of your laces into one of the extra holes at the top of the shoe.



Take one lace in each hand and make an X. Then loop the lace under and pull.



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WHEN I GET DRESSED I WILL PUT ON...



Clothes for Cold Weather



When it is cold outside, I need to wear a coat. I may also need a hat, scarf, and gloves. I wear pants and long sleeve shirts when it is cold. I wear shoes and socks. I may even need boots!



Clothes for Warm Weather



When it is warm outside, I can wear shorts and t-shirts. I can wear sandals if I want to, but I can also wear my tennis shoes. I may even get to wear my bathing suit if I am going to the pool or beach!



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What we learned today

- Individuals with Down syndrome may need a variety of assistance with self-care, and assistance can vary from task to task.
- Breaking tasks down into simpler steps can increase independence.
- Consider sensory needs and how that can impact self-care.
- Visual supports can be used to support independence with self-care tasks.
- With time, practice, possible modifications, and teaching how the individual learns best, a person with Down syndrome can be independent with a variety of self-care and hygiene tasks.

Contact information

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Questions?

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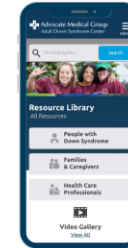
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FREE HEALTH RESOURCES

for people with Down syndrome, families and caregivers, and professionals



Resource Library



Find information on aging, puberty, mental health, self-talk, weight management, Alzheimer's disease, social skills, and more.

adscresources.advocatehealth.com

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