

### Hair Cut



Taking any child for the first haircut can be a challenge. Sitting still for a long period of time while an unfamiliar person cuts their hair can be quite uncomfortable for a first timer. Below are some tips for families and stylists to make getting a haircut a more positive experience for a person with autism.

To ensure the haircutting experience goes over well, starting with in home hair care can be helpful.

- Allow the child to become familiar with hair washing and the products that are used. Let the child touch, hold, feel, and smell the shampoo and conditioner. Reward when appropriate.
- Since it may take a few times for the person to get used to the feeling of having hair rinsed, start with a little water at a time, increase slowly. Offer distractions such as a bath toy to hold.
- When first brushing hair, show the brush, go slow and start from the ends of the hair and work your way up toward the roots. Use a wide toothed comb or brush.
- If using product to style the hair, repeat the shampoo and conditioner steps mentioned above.
- Before drying, show the blow dryer and turn it on a low, cool setting. It might be helpful to blow the air onto the child's hands or arm to show it will not.
- If it's a first haircut, select a kid's haircut place. Many salons and barber shops have TV's or video players. To pre-occupy the person ask the management to change the channel or play a favorite video.
- Call or visit the selected establishment ahead of time. Speak with the manager about coming in to get better acquainted with the environment and people. This visit may or may not involve getting a haircut. It may take some time to get familiar with such things as sitting in the chair or wearing a cape before the actual hair cut.
- Try different chairs out and try different capes on. Let the person see the equipment that will be used.
- Praise or reward for each step no matter how big or small.
- Schedule the appointment during a less busy time of day. At first, the less distractions the easier it may be to acclimate.
- Practice as much as you can at home. Review the steps and social story at home and adjust as needed.

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