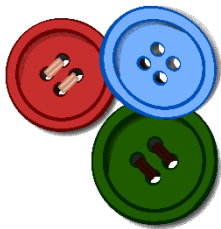


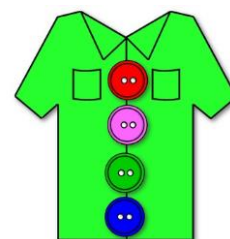
Self-Care Buttons



Fastening and unfastening buttons are hard skills to learn as we need both our hands to work together but do different things. Most children find it tricky and need lots of practice before they become independent.

General tips: -

- Use bigger buttons in a different colour to the fabric. Plain coloured fabric is easier than checks or stripes which can be tiring for the eyes and make buttonholes difficult to see. Patterns can be re-introduced when the child is able to do up buttons.
- It is easier to practice when your child can see what they are doing. Start with a shirt and either lay it flat on a table or in their lap. Then practice with the shirt on. Once they can fasten the button whilst wearing the shirt, ask them to close their eyes and complete it by feeling the button and the fabric. Then do the same with trousers and hooks and eyes.
- Make sure that the buttonhole is large enough for the button to fit through easily. Using clothes that have been well worn helps. If the buttonholes are too tight for your child to manage, you can take the buttons off and replace them with slightly smaller ones or make the buttonholes slightly larger by snipping the edges of the hole. To prevent fraying, and to provide a little sensory feedback and stability, seal the edges with clear nail varnish.
- Unfastening buttons is easier so start by teaching them this.
- To avoid any confusion, remove unnecessary or spare buttons from the clothing.



- Encourage your child to start buttoning from the bottom of the shirt so they can see what they are doing. To do top buttons, help your child check in a mirror to help them to see.
- Teach your child by using the backward chaining method. Push the button part-way through the hole so that it is 'peeking' out the other side. Ask your child to pull the button the rest of the way through. Once they can do this, help your child to push the button into the hole for you to pull through. Once they can do both parts separately, put both parts of the task together.

- Make it fun and practice as part of play. Dress teddies and dolls. Get your child to dress up in your old clothes with big buttons or toggles.



- Reduce the number of buttons they have to do by getting them to only unfasten the top couple of buttons on a shirt. They can then pull it off and back on, which is especially useful when changing for P.E. at school.

- Top buttons are always harder to fasten as you can't see what your hands are doing. Encourage your child to use a mirror to help them see. School shirt top buttons are especially difficult due to their size and the buttonhole changes direction.

- Practice, practice, practice! Give them opportunities every day!

Activities to try:

These activities will support the development of a pincer grasp (thumb and index fingertips) which is necessary for buttons.



- Post coins into a piggy bank.

- Make a slot in a lid of a container for posting large then smaller buttons into the slot and finally a pot with a smaller slot.



- Thread buttons onto a lace or string.



- Thread beads onto a pipe cleaner then move onto a lace or string with smaller beads.

Adapted from our colleagues : NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde – KIDS (www.nhsggc.org.uk/KIDS)

- Play with Lego. Encourage your child to picking up the small blocks with a pincer grasp.
- Roll playdough into a ball or sausage shape. Push buttons through the shape and using the opposite hand, try to grip it and pull it through. Start with large buttons and move onto smaller ones. You can also use Therapy putty for increased resistance.

Alternatives to buttons:

- If buttons and hooks and eyes are too hard, choose trousers, shorts and skirts with an elasticated waist band.
- Minimise the number of buttons by choosing polo shirts instead of a school shirt.
- Leave the top button undone on a polo shirt. If your child must wear a school shirt, their school tie can cover the opened top button.
- Leave the cuff buttons done up. If it's too tight for their hand to pop through, use elastic thread and resew the buttons on. This will allow the cuffs to stretch.
- Remove the harder to fasten buttons and sew them back on using elasticated thread. Your child may be able to pull the shirt over their head as the elastic can stretch to allow their head through. This can also make it easier to fasten these buttons as there is extra stretch to the thread.
- Use Velcro instead of buttons. Use Velcro on the back flap of shirts and jackets then sew the buttons back onto the front flap so you can still see the buttons. You can also purchase shirts with Velcro fastening.



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Further resources:

For more resources to help with dressing skills please visit our website or lookout for our Facebook posts.

www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/cypot



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NHS Borders Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Service