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# Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

## Helping a Child with ASD Develop Good Hygiene Habits

Teaching children good hygiene habits – brushing their teeth, washing themselves, combing their hair, and learning how to use deodorant – is one of the many challenges parents everywhere deal with on a daily basis. These skills are vitally important for all of us for health and social reasons.



Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other special needs, however, may have a more difficult time developing healthy hygiene habits because they lack the necessary skills and/or are sensitive to the stimuli associated with these tasks. Physical limitations, behavior problems, and other factors may also make attending to personal hygiene more difficult.

In addition, children with special needs may not experience the natural reinforcement most of us receive from engaging in self-care skills, such as feeling clean and comfortable. They may also be unaware of the social consequences of not having good hygiene.

The first thing parents can do to help their children develop good self-care skills is to teach them to work on these tasks one step at a time. Breaking each task down into smaller steps helps children learn how to accomplish them independently. It can also help them tolerate potentially troubling stimuli such as sounds, smells, and textures.

For example, if you are teaching your child about tooth brushing, you could break the task down into the following steps: 1) identifying the proper toothbrush; 2) putting the toothpaste on the toothbrush; 3) brushing each of the four quadrants of the mouth; 4) rinsing the mouth and then the brush; and 5) putting the toothbrush and toothpaste away.

Continued on page 2.

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## HELPING A CHILD WITH ASD DEVELOP GOOD HYGIENE CONTINUED....

It may also be helpful to create a social story that uses words, photos, and/or drawings to explain each of the steps involved in brushing the teeth that your child can review before beginning the task. Social stories may also be used to help children master bathing and grooming tasks.

In addition to teaching good hygiene skills in a step-by-step manner, providing some kind of reinforcer, or reward, for your child when he is doing a good job can be beneficial. The reward might be a sticker, a toy, some special praise, or a favorite story before bed. Initially, you can provide these reinforcers in between each step of each task. Then, as your child gains independence and acquires tolerance, you can deliver a reward after each task is completed. Finally, you can reward him after the entire hygiene routine has been completed.

It is also a good idea to create a routine. If you have a routine and stick to it, your child will always know what comes next, and the task will become a part of her/his everyday activities. Similarly, providing a visual schedule, as part of a daily calendar or schedule, or as a separate schedule just for hygiene-related tasks, may help. This allows the child to know what is expected of him and allows them to see when they will be all done with their cleaning and grooming tasks.

Don't forget the "fun factor." Try to promote the idea that practicing good hygiene can be fun! There are singing toothbrushes and special bath toys that can make each task something your child looks forward to and enjoys. When he is doing a good job, provide a lot of happy social attention and make sure your child knows you are proud of him.

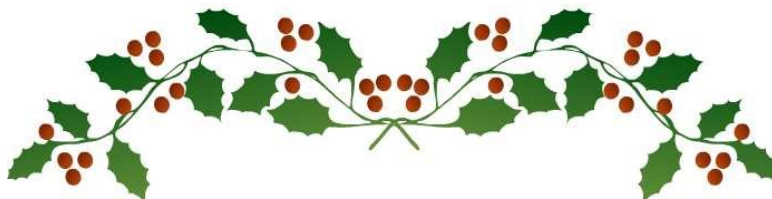
Breaking each task down into small steps, providing a schedule, making it fun, and providing reinforcement when your child is doing well can help make the task of completing hygiene skills easier for both of you.

If your child needs a lot of help, his school may be able to provide additional instruction or direction and help you learn how to teach each skill. When in doubt, or if things are too difficult, seek out the aid of a behavior analyst.

Developing good hygiene skills is not only vital to your child's good health; it may also help him to be accepted by peers at school and people in the community.

By Sarah Helm, M.A., BCBA, LABA

<https://www.mayinstitute.org/news/acl/asd-and-dd-child-focused/helping-a-child-with-asd-develop-good-hygiene-habits/>

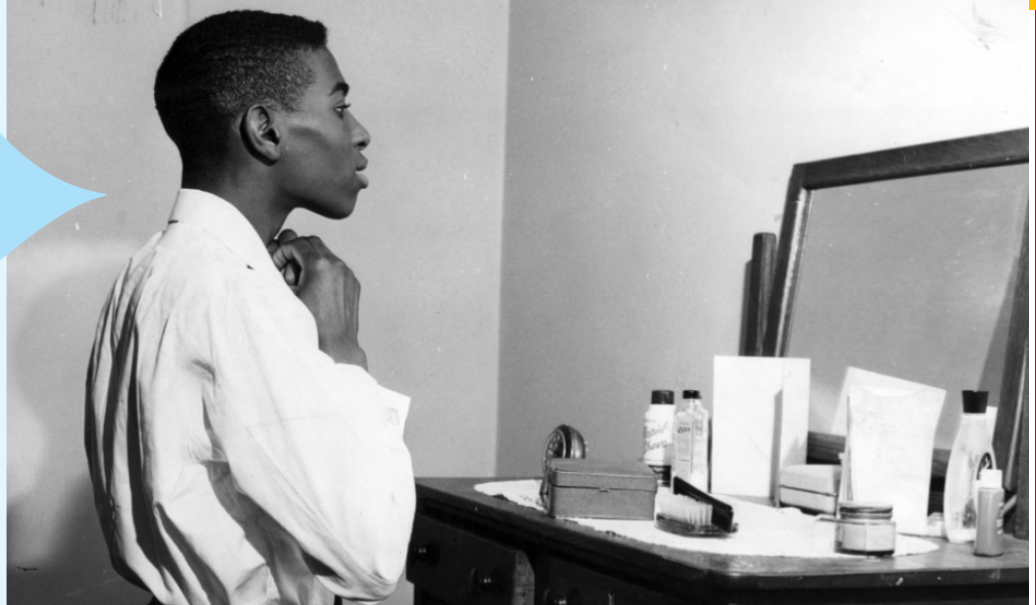


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# autism at-a-glance

July 2015

**Autism at-a-Glance**  
is a publication of the  
Center on  
Secondary Education for  
Students with ASD  
(CSESA)



## Hygiene in Adolescents with ASD

*Autism at-a-Glance* is a series of practitioner and family-friendly documents created by the Center on Secondary Education for Students with ASD (CSESA) designed for high school staff members supporting students on the autism spectrum, as well as family members of adolescents with ASD. The purpose of the *Autism at-a-Glance* series is to provide a current summary of topics relevant to high school students with ASD as well as practical tips and resources for school and community personnel and family members.

This *Autism at-a-Glance* was designed to support high school staff and family members in addressing hygiene skills with teens on the autism spectrum.

Families of adolescents with ASD, and school staff who support them, often report that maintaining good personal hygiene can be difficult for their sons, daughters, and students. Hygiene is the practice of keeping up with one's health and cleanliness. Maintenance of hygiene includes washing hands after going to the bathroom, using a tissue when blowing a nose, using deodorant, and many other skills. Poor hygiene impacts various aspects of one's life and the consequences of poor hygiene may impact health, social experiences (e.g. peers avoiding interaction), and employment. A teen experiencing adverse responses in his/her environment may not recognize his/her poor hygiene as the cause. As a result, some teens may internalize their negative feelings, which could lead to decreased self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

### Potential Areas of Difficulty Contributing to Poor Hygiene

#### Sensory Challenges

Teens may have difficulty using certain items that are typically used to clean. Some may over-respond to certain items related to hygiene tasks, finding the physical contact, lights, or sounds during a hygiene routine to be unbearable (e.g., sound of an electronic toothbrush, the material of a towel, smell of a soap/lotion). Others may under-respond and not react even during pain (e.g., temperature of the water is too hot, cuts on the face when shaving).

#### Sequencing and Following Directions

Teens may struggle to remember the many steps needed to complete a hygiene task. They also may need more time than other teens in processing instructions. Transitioning to the next step of a hygiene routine without reminders or prompts can also be a challenge for some teens.

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## HYGIENE IN ADOLESCENTS WITH ASD CONTINUED...

“Poor hygiene impacts various aspects of one’s life...”



### Potential Areas of Difficulty Contributing to Poor Hygiene (continued)

#### Time Management

Teens may struggle to remember the many steps needed to complete a hygiene task. Teens may need more time to complete their hygiene routines. One may lose track of time in a particular step in the routine (e.g., continuing to stand in the shower for a long time before moving on to other steps). Transitioning to the next step of a hygiene routine without reminders/prompts can also be a challenge for some teens.

#### Promote Healthy Hygiene Habits Early

It is important to begin healthy hygiene habits as early as possible. It may be helpful to consider beginning these healthy habits before puberty, which would contribute consistency to the teen’s daily schedule before and during the occurrence of hormone level changes. In turn, the teen will be learning skills that the steps towards maximizing independence.

Having discussions with the teen or finding ways to assist understanding will help alleviate confusion about changes in his/her body. Teach and utilize the formal names of body parts to aid in future conversations about hygiene and puberty. If needed, ask a professional for guidance or inclusion in the conversation. Including a

professional the teen knows and is comfortable talking with, such as a doctor, teacher, or therapist can serve as another resource.

#### Important Reminders

Parents, teachers, and other people working with an individual with ASD on hygiene tasks need to respect the individual’s right to privacy. When practicing hygiene skills or having a discussion on a related topic with a teen, remember to be in a safe, private environment.

Additionally teachers and other professionals need to continue to be sensitive to matters within the home. It is important to recognize there are multiple factors that may impact a student’s level of hygiene when coming to school. Families with financial difficulties could have trouble consistently purchasing hygiene items and/or have limited access to washing machines (e.g., may be difficult to get to a laundromat).

Lastly, different families have different hygiene practices and expectations. Families, staff, and the teens with ASD may view hygiene needs differently so it is important to have an open dialogue between students, school staff and parents about hygiene.

Continued on page 5.

## HYGIENE IN ADOLESCENTS WITH ASD CONTINUED...



### Suggestions for School Staff and Parents

#### 1 Visual Supports

Provide objects, pictures, or written cues to guide completion of a hygiene task.

- Give cards depicting pictures of the step-by-step process of showering.
- Use a checklist of tasks to complete in the bathroom in the morning before school.
- Make a hygiene kit for the matching task (e.g., for brushing teeth, put a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, and mouthwash in a kit).
- Many examples can be found here: [http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=3613&mode=mod\\_resources&action=display\\_category&resource\\_cat=15](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=3613&mode=mod_resources&action=display_category&resource_cat=15)

#### 2 Modeling

Demonstrate the process of completing a hygiene task.

- Brush your teeth and count out the length of time you spend on each section of teeth with the individual.

Use a video model for teens who may need repeated viewing of the model.

- Record video of modeling the steps of shaving.

#### 3 Social Narratives

Write descriptions of a social situation and include appropriate responses with reasoning.





- Describe the morning routine and when to change into clean school attire for the day
- Write down some examples decisions about hygiene during and after meals - when to wipe off your face, what types of foods may require breath mints after a meal.

#### 4 Reinforcement

Identify activities that are motivating or preferred items and use learning hygiene skills as opportunities to engage with the activity or item.

Note: Some teens may not perceive their hygiene problems as an issue (e.g., they personally are not bothered by not having showered in a week, so why would it matter to others).

- After completion of a hygiene routine (e.g., can spend 10 minutes on the iPad after completion, showering, putting on deodorant, brushing teeth).

Get toothbrush and toothpaste 	Put toothpaste on toothbrush 	Brush teeth. 	Drink water. 
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Example 1: Picture card to depict several steps of a hygiene routine

Task	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Shower			
Wash hair with shampoo			
Wear clean clothes appropriate to weather			
Wear clean underwear and socks (1x means dirty/wash)			
Comb or brush hair (cut hair every month)			
Check fingernails, clean and trim if needed (about 1 time a week)			
Cut or file toenails (about 1 time a week)			
Brush teeth and floss AM			
Brush teeth and floss PM			
Deodorant daily			
Wipe until clean, change underwear if dirty daily			
Clean glasses daily			

Example 2: Checklist created by Indiana Resource Center for Autism

Continued on page 6.

## HYGIENE IN ADOLESCENTS WITH ASD CONTINUED...



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### Resources

The Healthy Bodies Toolkit

<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies/>

Autism Speaks

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2013/08/09/teen-autism-needs-help-hygiene-appropriate-behavior>

Children's Specialized Hospital

<http://www.childrens-specialized.org/CSRedesign/media/Autism/Tip%20Sheets/Real-Life-Tips-for-Kids-with-Autism-Personal-Hygiene.pdf>

Autism and Puberty: A Web-share Session from Indian Resource Center for Autism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23oc04BVtN4>

Evidence-Based Practices:

Visual Supports

<http://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources/ebp-briefs/visual-supports>

Modeling

<http://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources/ebp-briefs/video-modeling>

Social Narratives

<http://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources/ebp-briefs/social-narratives>

Reinforcement

<http://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/resources/ebp-briefs/reinforcement>

<https://csesa.fpg.unc.edu/sites/csesa.fpg.unc.edu/files/Hygiene%20in%20Adolescents%20with%20ASD.pdf>

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## TEACHING YOUR CHILD HYGIENE AND GROOMING SKILLS



### TEACHING YOUR CHILD HYGIENE AND GROOMING SKILLS

The thought of teaching your child on the autism spectrum about grooming and personal hygiene can be intimidating. As with any learning task, these tasks too can be broken down into smaller, manageable parts. This helps you and your child to monitor progress so that both of you can feel successful.

As your child approaches adolescence, it is important for him or her to understand the importance of being clean, looking nice, and having a neat appearance. Talk to him or her about smelling clean and looking his or her best. Use something that might inspire your child, perhaps a photo or a favorite movie, TV, or music idol. Taylor Swift motivated one young woman to even learn how to apply makeup! Consider posting laminated photos or pictures in the bathroom.

It is most important to develop a routine:

- Create and laminate a short checklist or keep it listed on a dry erase board.
- Number the steps and consider taking photos of your child going through his or her routine.
- Mount morning and bedtime routines on the wall in a place where your child will see them often.
- Have your child check off steps as he or she completes them.

Sample Morning Schedule:

1. Use the toilet
2. Wash hands
3. Wash face with soap
4. Rinse with water
5. Dry with towel
6. Apply moisturizer
7. Apply underarm deodorant



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## TEACHING YOUR CHILD HYGIENE AND GROOMING SKILLS CONTINUED...

8. Get dressed
9. Hair care (you may want a separate checklist for this, depending on your child's needs)
10. Breakfast
11. Brush/floss teeth
12. Rinse with mouthwash

### Sample Evening Schedule:

1. Shave (you may want a separate checklist, depending on your child's needs)
2. Shower (again, you may want a separate checklist mounted in the shower stall)
3. Dry off
4. Put on pajamas
5. Apply moisturizer
6. Brush/floss teeth
7. Rinse with mouthwash



### Helpful Ideas:

- Whenever possible, give your child a choice of products, choice of textures, fragrances, etc.
- Keep the supplies near one another in the bathroom cabinet, or consider using baskets or a bathroom caddy with pockets for supplies.
- Have 2 baskets for the morning routine and two for the evening routine; keep all the supplies needed for the morning routine in one basket, and as each item is used, have your child put it into the second basket until the first basket is empty; create the same set of baskets for the evening routine.
- Number supplies in order of use.
- Make a self care book: create a booklet with step by step instructions with photos of supplies needed.
- When teaching your child about applying deodorant or fragrance, provide him or her with simple instructions that are easy to follow, such as two (or three) swipes of deodorant under the arm or holding out the perfume bottle at arm's length and spraying one or two times. Taking pictures of your child spraying fragrance on will also help him or her remember these

Continued on page 9.



## TEACHING YOUR CHILD HYGIENE AND GROOMING SKILLS CONTINUED...

rules.

- Laminated photos of supplies needed for each task can be posted to the bathroom wall or a self care book can remain in the bathroom.
- Use an iPad® or iPhone® to take digital pictures and create interest, but be careful what you use (no images of naked bodies). You can even put it to music! (Be careful with electronic devices near water; heed manufacturers' instructions.)
- Use your "team" for help building and teaching these programs. In particular, your child's occupational therapist may have good ideas for how to teach hygiene and grooming skills.

### Additional Resources:

- *Hygiene and Related Behaviors for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum and Related Disorders* by Kelly Mahler, MS, OTR/L; Autism Asperger Publishing Company, 2009. Presented in a lesson plan format, the book is designed to help children on the autism spectrum make the connection between hygiene behaviors and how those behaviors are perceived by others. There is a CD with worksheets that can be downloaded and printed for use.
- *Personal Hygiene? What's that Got to Do with Me?* by Pat Crissey; Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd., 2005. This book was developed for individuals on the autism spectrum and other learning and developmental disabilities to help them understand how others perceive their appearance and the social implications of neglecting personal hygiene. There are quizzes and hands-on activities to demonstrate why and how to perform various hygiene tasks.
- *Taking Care of Myself, A Hygiene, Puberty, and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism* by Mary Wrobel; Future Horizons, 2003. Written by a teacher/speech-language pathologist, the book uses simple stories to demonstrate what to say and not to say when talking to your child about hygiene and puberty. The book addresses hygiene, modesty, body growth and development, menstruation, touching, personal safety, and more.

<https://www.carautismroadmap.org/teaching-your-child-hygiene-and-grooming-skills/>

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## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS FOR HYGIENE

Below is a reference list of websites that offer additional supports of suggestions, visual resources and routines to help your child learn the hygiene skills.

- These 2 articles focuses on teens and Children ages 9-15: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/health-daily-care/daily-care/personal-hygiene-autistic-teens> & <https://teenage-resource.middletownautism.com/teenage-issues-and-strategies/life-skills/self-care/personal-hygiene/>
- <https://starautismsupport.com/files/self-care> Star Autism support has a list of visuals and routines to help Elementary Age Children. The supports offered on this page will help your child with self-care routines, like bathroom routine, handwashing and nose blowing.
- [http://www.livingwellwithautism.com/how\\_to\\_use\\_picture\\_cards\\_and\\_schedules/self\\_care\\_visual\\_helpers](http://www.livingwellwithautism.com/how_to_use_picture_cards_and_schedules/self_care_visual_helpers) Living Well with Autism has a list of premade visuals that you can download and use immediately.
- [https://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/selfhelp\\_personalcare.htm](https://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/selfhelp_personalcare.htm) Do2Learn has self care visual cards ready to print and use to support your child.
- <https://able2learn.com/categories/health-and-physical-education/hygiene.html> Able2learn has a variety of self care visuals that you can download for free and use to support your child in a variety of life stages.
- <https://www.childrens-specialized.org/Content/Uploads/Childrens%20Specialized/KohlsAutism/Autism/Tip%20Sheets/Real-Life-Tips-for-Kids-with-Autism-Personal-Hygiene.pdf> KohlsAutism offers a great suggestions and this resource list:

### Helpful Resources for Personal Hygiene

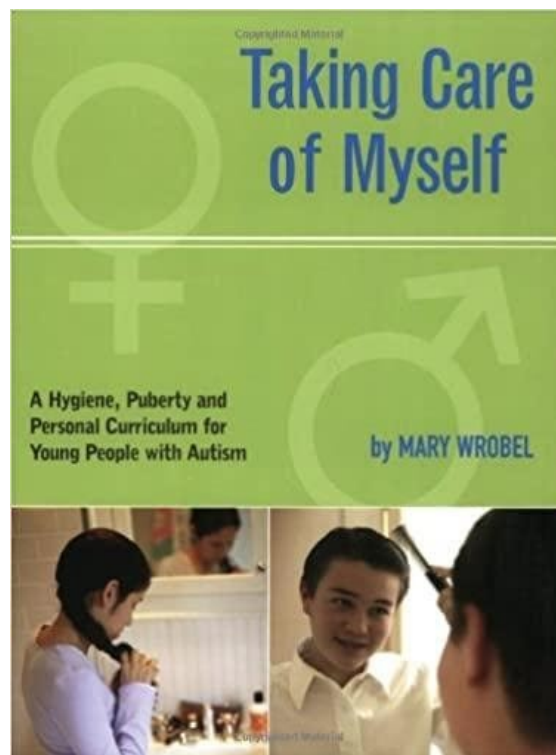
- **Do 2 Learn Self Help Pictures**  
<http://www.dotolearn.com/picturecards/printcards/index.htm>
- **Guide to Brushing Teeth**  
[http://www.speakingofspeech.com/uploads/Toothbrushing\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.speakingofspeech.com/uploads/Toothbrushing_Guide.pdf)
- **The Healthy Bodies Toolkit**  
<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/healthybodies/>
- **Hygiene and Related Behaviors for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum and Related Disorders: A Fun Curriculum with a Focus on Social Understanding**  
Kelly J. Mahler; Autism Asperger Publishing Company; 1934575429
- **Managing Puberty, Social Challenges, And (Almost) Everything: A Video Guide for Girls – DVD**  
Coulter Video, Inc.
- **Oral Hygiene and Autism**  
<http://snrmag.com/2011/01/hygiene-brushing-teeth/>
- **Personal Hygiene? What's that Got to Do with Me?**  
Pat Crissey; Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd; 1843107961
- **Puberty and Autism Spectrum Disorders (Autism Victoria)**  
<http://www.amaze.org.au/uploads/2011/08/Fact-Sheet-Puberty-and-Autism-Spectrum-Disorders-Aug-2011.pdf>
- **Sexuality & Sexuality Instruction with Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities (Peter F. Gerhart)**  
<http://www.howard-autism.org/docs/Workshops/Gerhardt.pdf>
- **Taking Care of Myself: A Hygiene, Puberty and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism**  
Mary Wrobel; Future Horizons; ISBN 1885477945
- **Teen with Autism Needs Help with Hygiene & Appropriate Behavior (Autism Speaks)**  
<http://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2013/08/09/teen-autism-needs-help-hygiene-appropriate-behavior>

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***Taking Care of Myself: A Hygiene, Puberty and Personal Curriculum for Young People with Autism*** by Mary Wrobel

Puberty can be especially tough when young people have autism or other special needs. Through simple stories similar to Carol Gray's *Social Stories*®, author Mary Wrobel teaches caregivers exactly what to say (and not say) and shows how you can create helpful stories of your own. Mary addresses hygiene, modesty, body growth and development, menstruation, touching, personal safety, and more. Young students can benefit from self-care skills such as using the toilet, brushing teeth, and washing hands. This book is followed up by ***Taking Care of Myself 2: For Teenagers and Young Adults with ASD***, which covers topics such as: dressing for different events, feeling anxious in social situations, public versus private behaviors, staying healthy, anxiety, depression, suicidal feelings, social media issues, sexual harassment, finding and keeping friends (including a boyfriend or girlfriend), safe and responsible sex, deciding to have sex with a partner, and more.



### ***Adventures with Big E: Help with Hygiene***

by Jacqueline Folks

Join Big E as he faces the challenges and celebrates the triumphs of learning hygiene. This book is the first in a series of unique children's literature structured as social stories to help children with autism, anxiety, and other developmental challenges.

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## APP REVIEW



### iDo Hygiene

[iDo Hygiene](#) is a new app providing instruction, video and games to learn personal hygiene. Included is an option to create your own images in the 12 hygiene areas. Created by the [Center for Educational Technology](#) for individuals with cognitive impairment, autism and other special needs, it features the following 12 self-care tasks:

1. Shampooing— free
2. Washing your Face— free
3. Washing your Hands
4. Taking a Shower
5. Brushing your Teeth
6. Applying deodorant
7. Shaving with an Electric Shaver
8. Combing long hair
9. Making a Ponytail
10. Boy in Bathroom
11. Girl in Bathroom
12. Public Bathroom

The app is free for installation with shampooing and washing your face tasks free. The additional 10 skills are an in-app purchase for \$1.99 each or all units for \$9.99.

What's in each unit:

- A video presenting a teenager demonstrating the activity, step by step.
- A sequence of the task's steps in images, accompanied by narrated text for each stage, and the option to mark the completion of each step with a V.
- A unique tool to create a personal sequence of the task's steps, by photographing directly from the application.
- A tool to create a personal video of the task, directly from the application.
- Learning games to practice understanding of the sequence – what is the next step, what doesn't belong, and so on.

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## VISUALS

### Restroom Visual



Pants down



Sit on toilet



Use toilet  
paper to wipe



Pants up

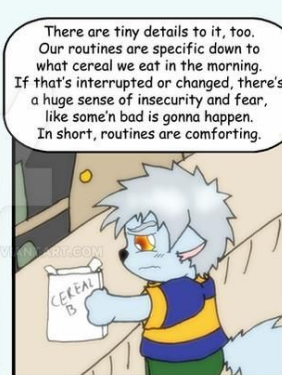


Wash hands

### Hand Washing Visual

1. Wash Hands	
2. Add Soap	
3. Scrub 20 Seconds	
4. Rinse with Water	
5. Dry with Towel	

## AuTalkz



## Routines

The LBL ESD Autism Agenda Newsletter is a compilation of national and regional resources designed to support families and school teams. Every effort is made to provide accurate and complete information in the LBL ESD Autism Agenda Newsletter; however, LBL ESD cannot guarantee that there will be no errors. For example, some of the content within curated resources from across the nation may not apply to Oregon. LBL ESD does not assume any legal liability for any direct, indirect or any other loss or damage of any kind for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, product, or process disclosed herein, and do not represent that use of such information, product, or process would not infringe on privately owned rights.