

Messy Play



What is Messy Play?

Messy play is the term used for any activities allowing children to work with their hands to create a controlled mess. This can often involve ingredients such as paint, sand, slime, water, clay or mud.

Why is Messy Play Important?

Messy play is important because it helps to develop core foundational skills in a child's early years. With no task or objective set this fosters curiosity, imagination and exploration. It is through exploration and touch that children learn.

What Activities can I do with my Child?

- Finding treasures, 'fossils' or favourite objects in pasta, rice, beans, sand or wet spaghetti
- Playing with shaving foam or crazy soap
- Playing with Play-doh, putty, gloop or slime
- Hand or finger painting
- Baking and cooking – making sure to mix with your hands!
- Use of different temperatures e.g. ice cubes
- Building sandcastles
- Helping in the garden e.g. weeding, planting, collecting leaves.
- Water play
- Arts and Crafts e.g. pompoms, glue, stickers, clay.
- Food play e.g. jelly, yoghurt
- Feely Bags – fill a bag or pillowcase with different objects e.g. toy cars, plastic animals, building bricks, textured balls, cotton wool balls, comb, spoon, cup etc. Encourage your child to choose an object from the bag and identify the object starting with allowing your child to look in the bag first then asking them to do this with their eyes closed.

Additional ideas:

- Consider adding colour to any of the wet textures mentioned e.g. water play, wet spaghetti
- If tolerated, you could add scents e.g. orange, mint, strawberry or essential oils safe to the skin

How can I Make these Activities Easier for my Child?

Contact the Paediatric Occupational Therapy Department on **01481 223801** if you need further details or have any questions.

- Never force your child to touch, tolerance builds up over time
- Use of a utensil if the child is apprehensive e.g. scoop, spoon, trowel
- Start with less challenging e.g. firm, hard and progress to more challenging e.g. wet, sloppy
- Sensory bags – placing different textures and temperatures into sealed bags allowing the child to see and possible touch, without having to touch the ingredients

N.B. your child be supervised at all times and any allergies should be taken into consideration.

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