



Occupational Therapy Advice and ideas for smearing

There are a range of reasons why children might present with smearing. These include:

- They like the feel and texture (tactile sensory feedback)
- They seek out strong smells (olfactory sensory feedback)
- They seek out inedible items for mouthing/ eating (may be related to Pica and/ or a vitamin deficiency)
- Limited access to other stimulation/ toys e.g. when they are in their bed
- They know that this is an effective way to grab the attention of adults (behavioural)
- Medical need/ feeling unwell and unable to explain this (if smearing is out of character)

Strategies that can work:

- Offer sensory trays/ messy play activities with a variety of textures to explore
- Have a supply of play doh/ play foam/ cloud sand
- Use scented items such as pens or essential oils on cotton wool for smelling. If these are not effective, there is a specific spray that smells like poo on Amazon
- If using toilet paper for wiping, replace with toilet wipes/ wet wipes
- All in one outfits/ unitards will reduce access, they can be found on the Fledglings website
- Wipe clean bedding can be found via the Fledglings website
- Access to low stimulation toys or chews in bed such as a tactile cushion/ busy board
- Offer vibrating snake/ toy or other high stimulation toy during changing if this is a time where smearing behaviour occurs
- If behavioural, try to offer periods of 1:1 intensive interaction during the evening as this can help to minimise attention-seeking behaviours



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Consider trying an edible 'fake poo' recipe (great for getting a similar texture and for those that are mouthing, to replace with safer option):

Ingredients:

- 1.5 cups of powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup of peanut butter (crunchy)
- 1/3 cup of cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon milk



Ensure it is left to dry before using, and use within a few days due to milk content.

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