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## **Assessment of Clothing Need of Physically Challenged Children**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

Clothing is one of the basic necessities of human life. It plays a significant role in all round development of an individual, which is also true in case of physically challenged. Clothing has been recognized as a primary need of mankind throughout the world. It is one of the most personal components of daily life. Clothes render on individual a distinct identity. These give a feeling of self confidence and comfort and the wearer feels physically, psychologically and socially at ease. Uncomfortable clothes can take away the joy of living. This is equally true for special group, whose needs are greater because they need more comfort and convenience as compared normal people to become independent. The quality of life for physically challenged be substantially improved by a better choice of good looking and functional clothing and other textile products. Physical limitations often lead to special functional requirements of clothing and other textile products in living environment. Persons with highly sensitive skin have to consider the skin contact or tactile properties and avoid clothing with hard seams. For wheelchair users and for persons lying prolonged time in bed, who have a relatively low heat production, the thermal comfort properties are important. The transmission of moisture (sweat) from the skin is also a frequent problem. Also the mechanical durability of the materials in certain parts of the products can be a problem in many cases.

### **CLOTHING PROBLEMS OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED:**

Attention is focused on clothing for normal children are easily available in the local market with wider range of sizes, latest styles, colour, prints and so on. Whereas absolutely no attention was paid to the clothing needs of special group as they totally dependent on their mothers as far as clothing is concerned. In other words it may be expressed as the clothing requirement of special group is different from an average or normal group. The children with cerebral palsy face number of problems while performing their daily activities thus use support of crutches, guards, calipers and wheel chair according to the severity and requirements.

**Assistive devices and clothing implications:** Adaptive devices include canes, casts, braces, walkers, scooters, and wheelchairs. Each type comes in a variety of styles and weights that may have implications for your clothing choices.

**A. Casts and braces.** These immobilize a limb or joint so that it cannot slip out of position during healing. Casts may be made of plaster to be removed only at the end of the healing period or other stiff materials that fasten on with Velcro® so they can be removed periodically. Plaster casts must be kept dry.

#### **Implications for clothing**

- Clothes that go over braces or casts must have wider dimensions.
- Clothes that go under braces may be more comfortable if they fit close (such as a rib or jersey knit), have a soft texture, and are absorbent.
- For warmth if using an arm brace, sling, or cast, cover up by tying a fashionable scarf or shawl around shoulders.
- To protect a cast during a shower, it could be wrapped with a large plastic bag, such as a trash or cleaners bag and “sealed” at each end with a small towel and rubber bands to keep water from getting inside under the cast.

#### **B. Crutches, Canes, and walkers.**

These help in maintaining balance and walk more easily. Canes may have grips that are shaped to fit the hand and may have three or four short legs at the base for stability at floor level. Four-legged walkers and crutches should be adjusted to fit so that hand grips are at a comfortable height.

#### **Implications for clothing**

- Leather gloves that fit well may help you maintain a better grip on a crutch, cane, or walker.
- Two-piece outfits with pants rather than skirts will probably be easier to manage.
- Long skirts or coats should be avoided because they could get tangled and cause a fall.
- Longer shirts or tops will prevent tummy or back from being exposed if the crutches pull up clothes during walking.
- Durable fabrics with some stretch may wear better because crutches put strain on fabrics at the underarm.

#### **C. Wheelchairs**

Most clothing is designed to enhance the appearance of the wearer when standing upright. When seated, people have a different body shape, with the hips and knees bent. Standard skirts and trousers can gap at the back and bunch at the front of the waist. Over a period of time, the body shape and proportions of someone who sits all the time can change. The waist may thicken and hips and thighs broaden. Many disabled people have great difficulty finding clothes, which not only fit them properly but are also in fashion.

#### **Implications for clothing**

- Jackets, sweaters, and tops styled with raglan sleeves usually are fuller in the shoulders than those with set-in sleeves and may be more comfortable.
- Persons with well-developed arm and shoulder muscles may require a large-size jacket that needs alteration to fit comfortably at the waist. Call stores to inquire about free alternation.
- Jackets with shoulder pleats or center-back pleats allow a greater range of movement.

- Tops, jackets, and sweaters may be too long from shoulder to waist creating too much bulkiness at the waist. Shop for shorter styles or petite sizes, which are cut shorter.
- Tops and sweaters can also be cut off and hemmed to be shorter.
- Pants may pull down in the back (exposing hips), but be bulky in the lap. Specially cut pants with a lower front and higher back crotch-rise are designed to prevent this problem and are available from catalog sources.
- Catheters and urinary pouches require more leg width in pants and skirts; look for styles with gathers or pleats that are fuller over the hips.
- In general, pants may be better than skirts which are often too short for modesty or so long that they get tangled in the chair's wheels.
- Roll-up styles or 3/4 length sleeves are better than regular long sleeves, which may be too long. Sweaters look fine with the cuffs turned up.
- Cuffs in woven fabrics may be too tight and require buttoning.
- If button styles are preferred, sew the buttons with elastic thread, so the sleeve-cuff can be slipped on.
- Front or side openings are easier to manage than back openings.
- Pull-over knit styles may work if a person has full arm and head control. Neck openings should be large enough to slip on comfortably.
- Sweatshirt fleece or velour outfits are warm and comfortable for casual wear. They usually have sufficient roominess to accommodate special devices such as catheters and bags.
- Elastic waists and cuffs may be easier to manage, but elastic should not be tight or bind and restrict circulation.

### **IMPORTANT FEATURES OF FUNCTIONAL CLOTHING:**

Certain features are very important in clothing for these special children.

Clothing should be:

- A design the child likes
- Attractive in appearance
- Appropriate to the child's age and skills
- A fashionable color or pattern
- A texture comfortable to wear
- Designed to foster independence
- Easy to put on and take off
- Easy to fasten
- The correct size, but easy fitting — not restrictive to movement
- Easy to care for – machine washable and dryable
- Durable and strong enough to withstand tugs and pulls.

Finding all of these clothing characteristics in the right size can prove to be a difficult task for parents and caregivers. However, knowing the features to look for can help when shopping with a special child for clothes.

### **Fabric Selection:**

It can be useful to know the advantages and disadvantages of different types of fabric.

- Easy-care fabrics retain a good appearance and need little ironing
- Stretch fabrics dry quickly, are comfortable to sit in and make dressing easier

- Closely woven fabrics, made from blends of natural and synthetic fibres are strong, keep their shape, and resist creasing
- Smooth slippery fabrics are easier to get on/off
- Most man-made fibres are warm but can cause sweating and overheating and be uncomfortable for those with sensitive skin
- Natural fibres are more comfortable next to the skin and help to maintain a constant body temperature

### **Clothing design:**

Garment design can aid or prevent a child's comfort. Unstructured clothing is often desirable. However clothes that don't fit well can get tangled in equipment causing accidents or falls. Be watchful that clothes fit as well as possible. Children grow quickly; the outfit worn one year probably won't fit the next year.

Think about these ideas when helping children select clothing.

- Simple designs with few seams are often best.
- Avoid lumpy seams on body pressure points, such as in the center back.
- Embroidered motifs can add a spark of interest and stimulate conversation.
- A child's face can be emphasized with an interesting neckline or collar.
- Colors should be pleasing to the child.
- Bright colors call attention; darker, dull colors recede.
- Printed patterns, plaids, and tweeds tend to hide soil more than plain colors.
- Elastic waistbands expand as needed, but should not be too tight.
- Elastic cuffs at arms and ankles may make pants or tops warmer, but elastic should not be tight enough to leave a mark on the skin.
- Pullover tops don't need fastening, but need a neck opening that fits over the head easily. Children's t-shirts may have snap openings at the shoulder line.
- Raglan sleeves give freedom of movement.
- Medically required tubes can be threaded through various garment openings such as a shirt that buttons up the front. Another idea is to cut an opening in a pants pocket.
- Attractive bibs or pinafores can be used to protect clothes if drooling is a problem. Terrycloth and quilted cotton print-fabrics are useful for these because of their greater capacity to absorb moisture.
- Iron-on patches can provide reinforcement for areas subject to wear from equipment.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Clothing is one of the basic needs of human life. It plays an important role in the development of an individual, which is equally true in case of physically challenged children.

Clothes render on individual a distinct identity. This gives a feeling of self-confidence and comfort and the wearer feels physically, psychologically and socially at ease. Uncomfortable clothes can take away the joy of living. Disabilities often lead to special functional requirements for clothing and other textile products in the living environment, which enhance functions of physiological, mental, and physical comfort. Despite their physical difference, children with disabilities want to gain a sense of social identity and acceptance like any other child. Compared with people with no visible disabilities, their requirement for aesthetically

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pleasing clothing may be even stronger. Their special requirements for clothing design, material, and construction are critical to their quality of life. With the help of functional and specially designed clothing, a child can dress up independently and comfortably and still feel good about her-self, which increases self-confidence.

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