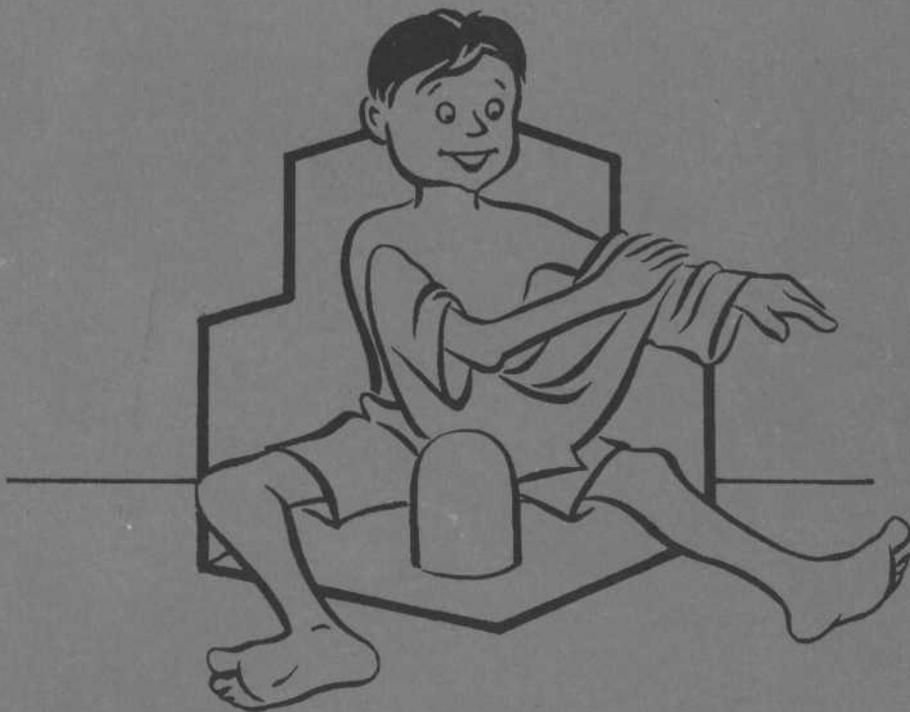


# Dressing

for the child with cerebral palsy



**Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy**



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# DRESSING

for the child with cerebral palsy

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# *Foreword*

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**B**arely three decades ago, the majority of children with severe developmental disabilities like cerebral palsy were regarded as ineducable. However, in the last few years, there has been a marked increase in the awareness of cerebral palsy and its implications. The most significant realisation has been the fact that the education of a child with a disability is not concerned merely with his intellectual development. The management of a child in every sphere of daily living is of equal importance. Consequently, an interdisciplinary and integrated approach is essential for achieving the maximum progress of a child.

Parents play a primary role in teaching their child the various skills of daily living. Undoubtedly, the parents have the best understanding of their disabled child, but they may often be unaware of the best way to go about this enormous task.

The Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) is the training and research division of the Spastics Society of Eastern India. The need for more information on cerebral palsy has long been felt both by parents and professionals. With this objective in mind, the IICP has planned to produce a series of books and booklets, written by a team of special educators, therapists and social workers. It is hoped that the easy to follow guidelines and illustrations will help parents in the daily management programme of their child.

A disabled child has the desire as well as the ability to learn different skills. With time, effort and constant encouragement, he will eventually achieve results to the best of his ability.

# INTRODUCTION

**Y**oung children learn to dress and undress themselves fairly early in life. They learn to take off their socks, shoes and underpants before they can take off the more complicated clothing like shirts and dresses.

Teaching handicapped children to take off and put on clothes may take time. Owing to their physical or mental handicap, it may be difficult for them to learn these skills on their own.

If you follow some common rules, you may find it easier to help your child to learn how to dress and undress.

**Choose a good position.** Decide the position in which your child is most steady, with or without support. This will make dressing and undressing easier for him. It will also help him to dress or undress himself if he has the physical ability to do so. Some suggestions are given in this booklet which will help you to choose a good position.

**Involve your child.** Involve your child every time you dress or undress him. Give him clear instructions or show him how to straighten his arms and legs. This will help him to cooperate with you as he grows older.

**Start with simpler clothing.** Always start with a simple item of clothing like a loose shirt with front buttons open. He will find it easier to take it off and put it on. This will make teaching and learning more successful.

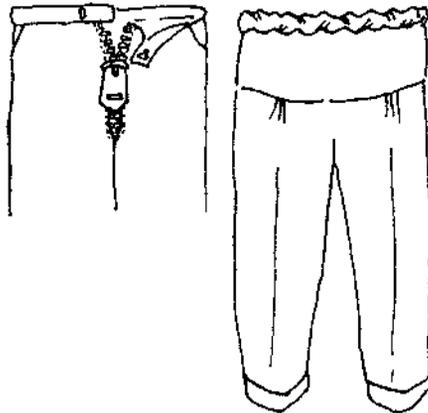
**Teach undressing first.** First teach your child to take off his clothes as it is much easier than learning to put them on.

**Start early.** Normally parents help their children to dress and undress till they are four or five years old. But if your child is handicapped, start teaching him as early as possible since it will take him more time to learn the skill.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR BUYING NEW CLOTHES

- Buy or make clothes one size larger. Whenever you get your child new clothes always make sure that they are one size larger.
- Shoes must be of the correct size, otherwise the child will find it difficult to walk.
- **Have front openings on clothes.** It will be easier to unfasten if the fasteners are at the front of the clothes.
- **Fasteners should be as simple as possible.** Instead of buttons, use zips on pants and shirts. Use elastic instead of string on pyjamas and buy all clothes with front openings.

Loose T-shirts without any fasteners are easy to wear.



- **Dress your child in clothes that are suitable for his age.**

# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO TAKE OFF HIS LOWER GARMENTS

**Lower garments including long pants, short pants, underwear, pyjamas, lungi, skirts and salwar.**

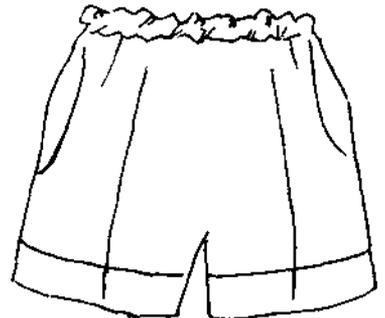
Start by teaching a child to take off shorts or panties and then move on to pants and salwar.

When you are teaching him to take off his lower garments, make sure that your child is wearing an underwear. This will teach him that he should not undress in front of anyone and he will develop a sense of privacy. For an older person, it will be less embarrassing for him to take off his pants in front of others if he is wearing underwear.

Once your child has learnt to take off other types of lower garments, he can practice taking off his undergarments in private.

Practice is very necessary for your child to improve. So make sure that you give him the opportunity to practise. Choose a time when you are not in a hurry to dress him so that he can take his time. In the beginning, he will need extra time to learn.

As suggested earlier, lower garments will be easier for your child to take off if they have elastic on top. For adults, pants with elastic on either side and buttons or zips in front are more appropriate.



Given below are suggestions on how your child can take off different garments and the most suitable positions for doing so.

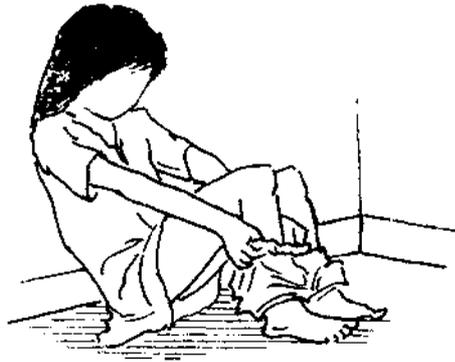
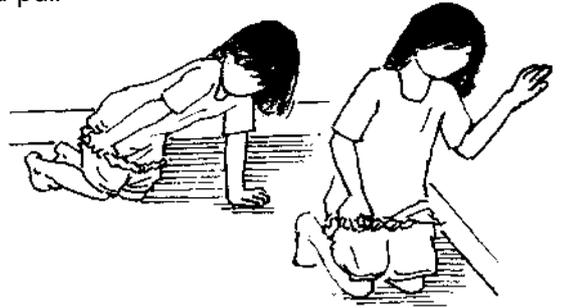
If your child can stand with very little support, then teach her to take off her shorts or panties by:

Helping her to hook her thumb in the top of the panties. She can do this by standing against the wall for support.



Or she can stand holding a towel rail or grill. Then teach her to push the panties down to her heels and kick them off her feet.

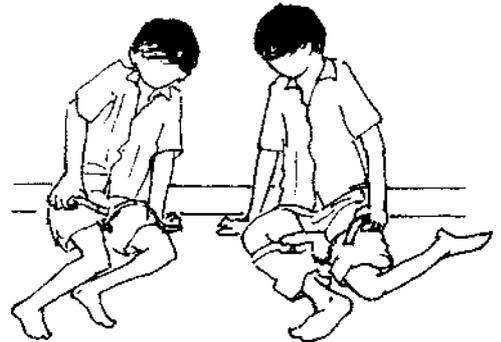
If she cannot stand, she can either get into a crawling position or kneel and pull down the panties to the knees.



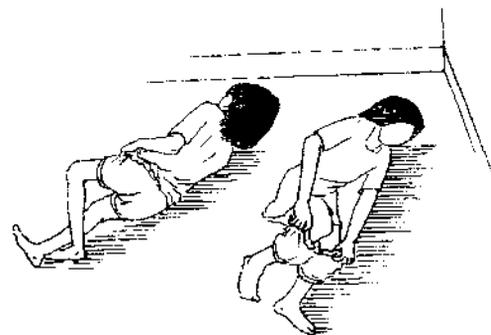
Then she can sit down and pull them off her feet.

If your child cannot kneel or get into a crawling position, then teach him to sit against the wall and take his shorts off by:

First turning to one side and pulling down the shorts on that side and then turning to the other side and pulling it down until the shorts are below the knees.

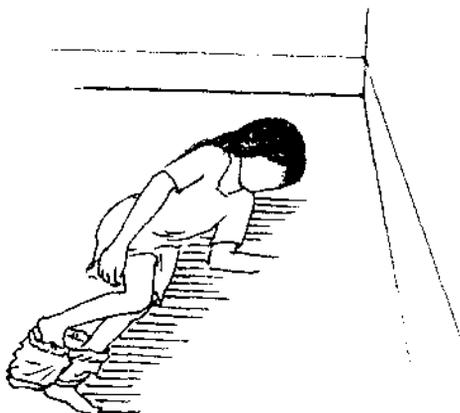


Then he can bend his knees and pull them off his feet.

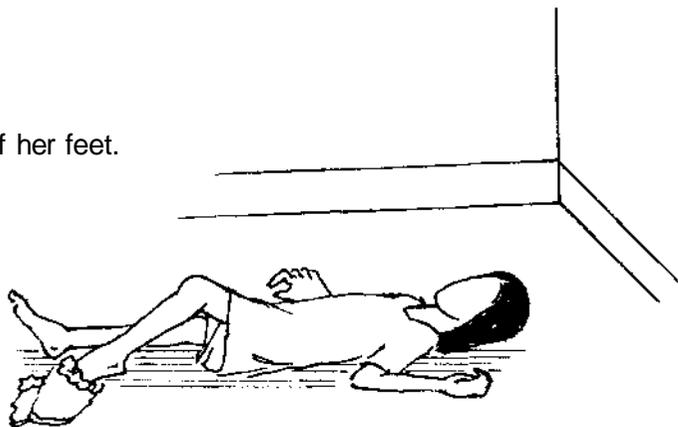


If your child cannot sit, then teach her to lie on the floor and take off her panties. She has to first turn to one side and pull down the panties on that side, then turn to the other side and again pull it down on that side, until the panties are below the knees.

Then she can push them down to the ankle with the other leg



and shake the panties off her feet.

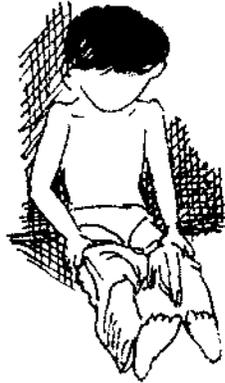


When your child is comfortable taking off shorts or panties, start teaching how to take off long pants or salwars in the same way.

# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO PUT ON HIS LOWER GARMENTS

Wearing pants is more difficult to learn. Choose a position in which your child will find it easier to hold the trousers and wear them.

If he is unable to stand with support, he can either sit on the floor against the wall



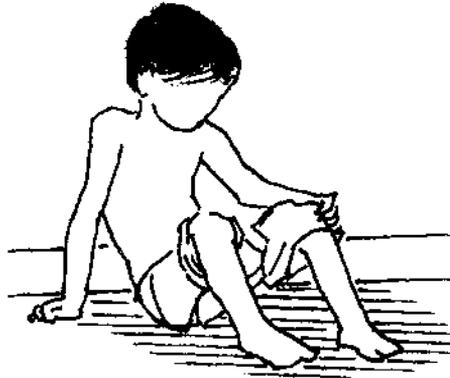
or on a chair.



Start by teaching him to locate the leg openings through which he will have to put in his feet. Then teach him how to hold the top band of the pants with one or both hands.

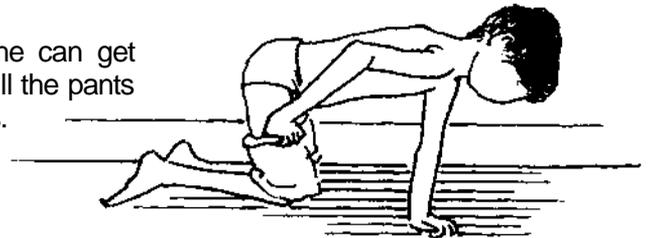


Let him put one leg at a time into the leg openings of the pants. If one leg is more physically affected, he should put in that leg first.

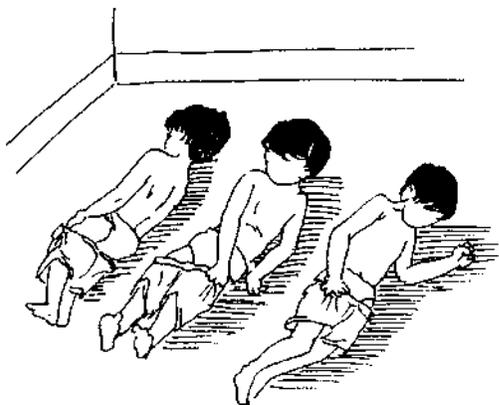
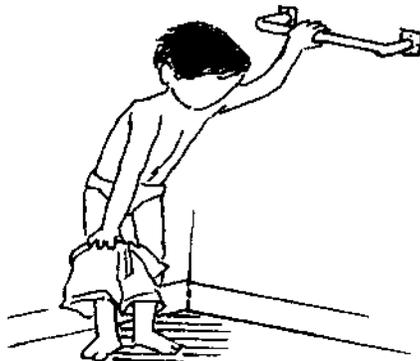


Once he has both legs in the respective trouser legs, let him pull the pants up above the knees.

If he is seated on the floor, he can get into a crawling position and pull the pants up to his waist from his knees.



If he can stand, he can pull up the pants from the ankle to his waist in one movement.



If he is lying on the floor, he can roll from one side to the other while he pulls the pants up to the waist.

Once the pants are up to his waist, he may need your help to fasten the buttons.

# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO TAKE OFF HIS UPPER GARMENTS

**Upper garments include shirts, T-shirts, blouses, sweaters, vests, dresses and kameez.**

When you start teaching your child to take off his upper garments make sure that it:

- has a front opening (shirt or a blouse) and
- is one size larger.

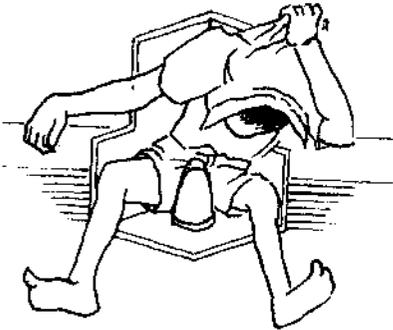
Put him in a sitting position for teaching him to take off his upper garment. If he needs support, place him against the corner of a room



or make him sit in a corner seat.

Teach him to take off the shirt or the blouse in the following way. He will find it much easier.

Let him hold the collar or neck of the shirt or dress, either with both his hands or with his stronger hand



and pull it over his head. Remind him to bend his head well forward.

He should take it off the least affected arm first



and then shake it off the other arm.



## TEACH YOUR CHILD TO PUT ON HIS UPPER GARMENTS

Putting on the upper garment is more difficult. The easiest way to teach your child to wear his shirt or blouse is by choosing a garment which is one size larger and has a front opening.

Keep the shirt in front of the child with the collar towards him and the opening of the shirt on top.



Teach him to locate one arm hole and put in one hand. If your child has one hand which is more affected than the other, teach him to put in the more affected arm first.



Some children find it helpful if the garment is placed on a table in front of them. This makes it easier for them to wear the shirt.

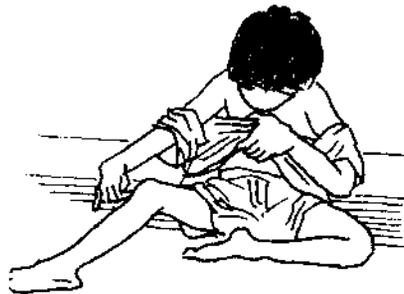


Then he can put the other hand in the other arm hole.



He should next pull up the sleeves to the elbows.

Once both the sleeves are up to the elbows, teach him to gather the end of the shirt



and pull it over his head and down his back.



**Remember:**

- Your child must keep his head down and forward while wearing his shirt as it becomes easier to take the shirt over the head.
- He can then pull the front of the shirt together and put on the buttons if he is able to. (Refer to the section 'Teach your child to button and unbutton').
- He can wear T-shirts, kurtas, vests and sweaters in the same way as a shirt or a dress.
- Your child will also need to learn to reverse and fold his shirt. You can teach him to do this after he has learnt to wear and take off his shirt. Only then can we say that he is totally independent in wearing his shirt.
- However, if your child is very physically handicapped, he may not be able to wear a shirt on his own. In this case, teach him to help you when you dress him. He can do this by:
  - sitting still and not struggling
  - allowing you to guide his hands when you dress him
  - choosing clothes of his choice.

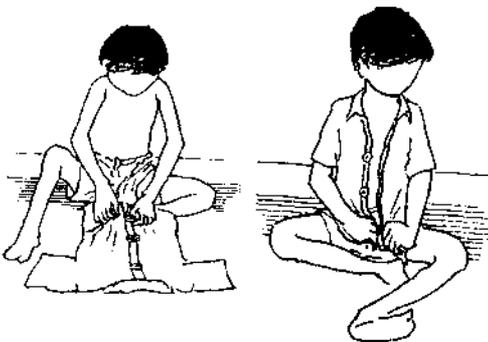
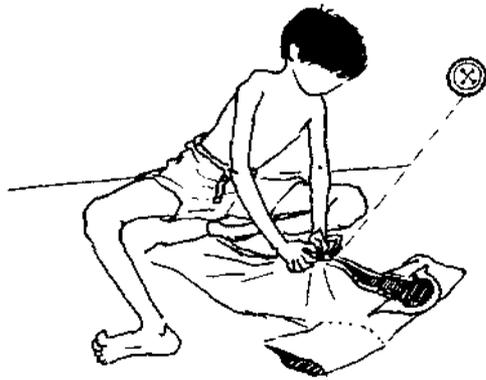
# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BUTTON AND UNBUTTON

Many physically handicapped children do not have good hand function. So buttoning and unbuttoning may be difficult for them.

To learn how to button, your child must have the ability to hold small objects between the finger and thumb.

Your child will need a lot of practice before he learns to use buttons.

It is easier to teach a child buttoning when he is not wearing the garment. At first you can give a garment with larger buttons to practise. Then give him a garment with smaller buttons.



Once he learns to button and unbutton clothes that he is not wearing, teach him to button and unbutton clothes that he is wearing.

Always teach him to fasten the bottom button first and gradually move up to the top button.



# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO TAKE OFF HIS SHOES

Shoes include sandals, chappals and shoes with laces or straps.

Positions suitable for taking off and wearing shoes:

- Make sure that your child is in a stable position:
- If he can sit without support, then he can.

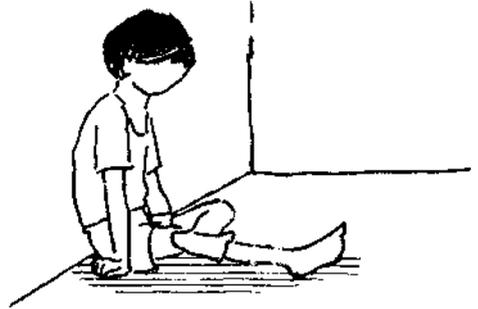
a) Sit on the floor



b) Sit on a chair or a stool.

- If your child needs supports to sit, then he can:

a) sit against the wall

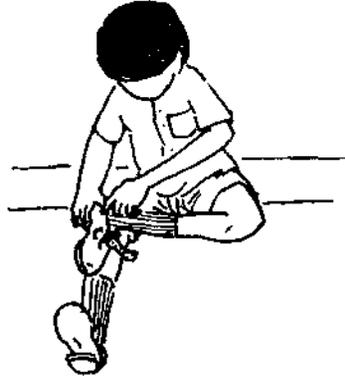


b) sit in a corner seat



c) sit on a chair or a wheelchair with arms.

The foot from which he is taking off or putting on the shoe can be crossed over the other leg to help him reach the shoe more easily.



### Steps for taking off shoes:

Teach your child to take off his shoes step by step. If he has difficulty in opening his laces, teach him to do so separately. (Refer to 'Fasteners' on page 26.) Once you have unfastened the laces, start by teaching him to:



- 2) Push the shoe down over the heel

- 1) Insert his thumb into the back of the shoe



3) and take it off his foot completely.

Repeat the same steps with the other foot.



When you start teaching him, give him a lot of help initially and gradually reduce the help until he can do it on his own.

Some children who find it difficult to take off their shoes in the usual way can be taught to take them off by pushing off the shoe with the other foot. This is possible after the lace or velcro has been loosened by you. Even if this does not make the child totally independent, it gives him a sense of achievement.



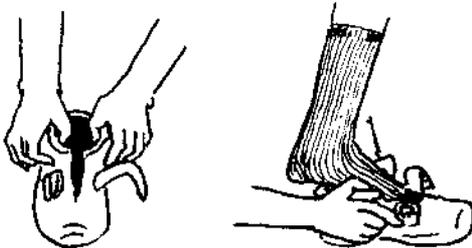
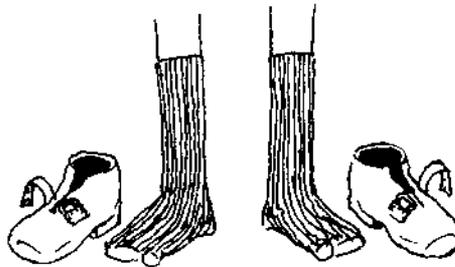
# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO PUT ON HIS SHOES

Wearing shoes is much more difficult than taking them off. Your child will need help and time to learn to do this.

## Start by teaching him:

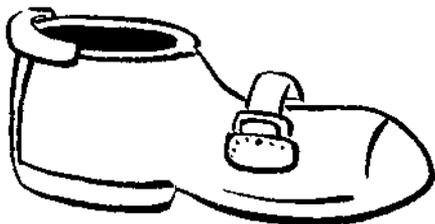
To identify the correct shoe (right shoe for the right foot and left shoe for the left foot.)

If he finds this difficult, you can mark the inside of one shoe with a little paint. Most children know which hand they eat with. So it will be easier for him if you mark the shoe for the same side as the hand he eats with.



Next, teach him to locate the opening of the shoe and put his toes in.

and push his foot into the shoe.



Help him to hold the back of the shoe firmly. Some shoes have loops which make them easier to hold.

Then he can pull it up over the heel until the foot is completely inside the shoe.



Children who are severely physically handicapped and have poor hand control, will not be able to learn this skill.

### **Fasteners**

Shoes are now available with velcro fasteners which are easier to handle. If your child has good hand control, he may also be able to tie laces with a lot of practice.

### **Remember**

Shoes are worn to give extra support and should always be tied firmly.

# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO TAKE OFF HIS SOCKS

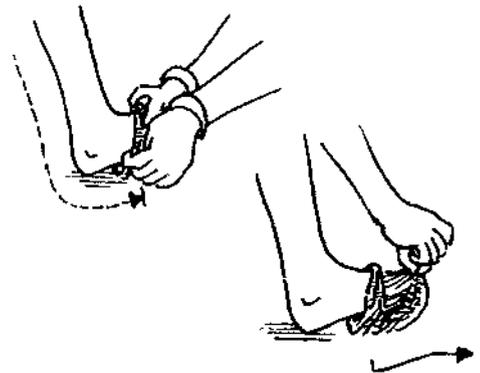
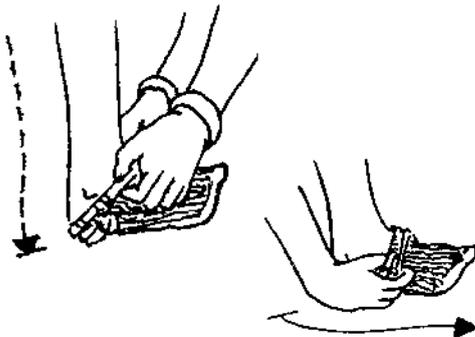
## Positions suitable for taking off and wearing socks:

Refer to the earlier section on 'Teach your child to take off his shoes'.

## Steps for taking off socks:

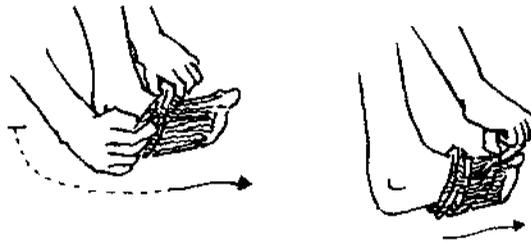
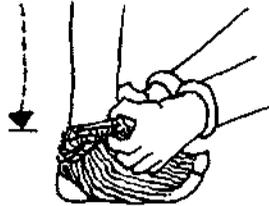
Start teaching a child to take off his socks by practising with a pair that is large for him.

- 1) At first, take off the sock up to the toe and teach your child to pull it off.



- 2) Next take off the sock up to the heel and let your child pull it off from there.

- 3) Once he has learnt to do the earlier steps, take the sock down to above the heel and teach him to pull it over the heel off the foot.



- 4) Finally he should learn to take off the sock entirely on his own.

The advantage of teaching in this manner is that at each step the child will complete the task of taking off his socks and will feel a sense of achievement.

At first give him all the help he requires but gradually reduce your help until he can do it on his own.

The socks can be gradually changed to the correct size. At first he will find it difficult to take off the socks. But with a lot of practice he will soon learn.

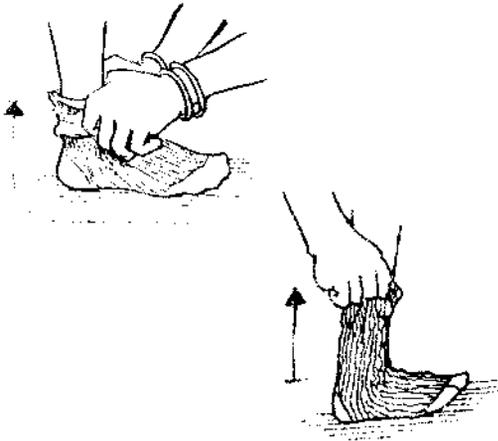
# TEACH YOUR CHILD TO PUT ON HIS SOCKS

Putting on socks can be difficult for a child. But it will be easier for him if you:

Buy cotton socks which have different coloured heels and toes.

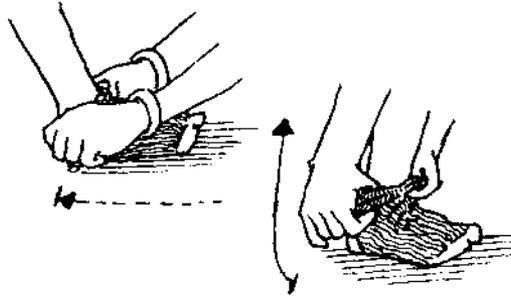


Teach him to wear the socks in the same way as he learnt to take them off.

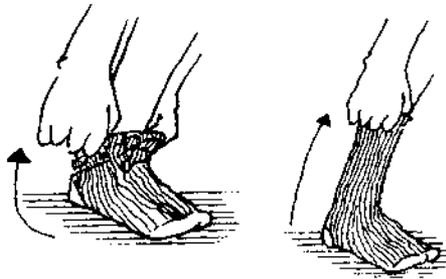


- 1) Put on his sock over the heel and teach him to pull it up to the calf.

- 2) Next put on the sock up to the heel and he can pull it up over the heel and up to the calf.



- 3) Finally teach him to locate the opening of the sock and put in his toes



and pull it over the heel up to the calf.

In this way he will learn to wear the sock step by step. Remember that each step may take many days of practice and training before he can move on to the next step.

Children who have difficulty in holding things with their hands may not be able to take off or put on their socks on their own.

But you can teach your child to help you to take off his socks or put them on for him by keeping his legs in place and not moving.