



### CHILDREN'S CLOTHING: EASE OF DRESSING/SELF-HELP FEATURES

Toddlers are eager to learn dressing skills. They learn how to take clothes off before they learn how to put them on. Soon after the first birthday, the child begins pulling clothing off. Between 18 and 24 months, toddlers learn to undress completely, unless clothes have difficult fasteners.

Self-dressing should be encouraged when a child begins to show interest. First attempts to help in dressing begin at about 13 or 14 months when the child holds out an arm or leg or thrusts an arm through the sleeve of a shirt or a leg into pants. By age two, the child can pull up pants, but shirts are still difficult. At age three, the child can usually dress independently except for help with buttons, difficult fasteners, and shoelaces.

To encourage interest in dressing, clothing should be easy to put on and take off. Self-dressing helps develop independence, responsibility, and cooperation. Look for the following features:

- Front openings so the child can see them.
- Big buttons (about the size of a nickel) and buttonholes.
- Hook and loop fasteners.
- Zippers—as few as possible. Must be placed where the child can see them easily and the pull large enough to get hold of easily.
- Easy-to-tell fronts and backs.
- Large enough or stretchy enough neckline to slip over head easily.
- Suspenders fastened with large buttons or overall hooks.
- Elastic or stretch waistbands in pants, shorts, and skirts.
- Pockets that are easy to reach and big enough to use.
- Knits and stretch materials that "give."

### CHILDREN'S CLOTHING: WEARABILITY

**Comfort** is the most important characteristic to look for in clothing for young children. Clothes that allow freedom of movement are the most comfortable. Knit clothes that stretch with movement are good choices. Avoid stiff or scratchy fabrics. Clothing size affects both comfort and movement. Clothes that are too small restrict movement. Pants that are too long can cause a child to trip. A long-sleeved shirt that covers the hands makes play difficult. All clothing that is the same size does not fit the same way. It is best to have children try on clothes before buying and/or during the construction phases.