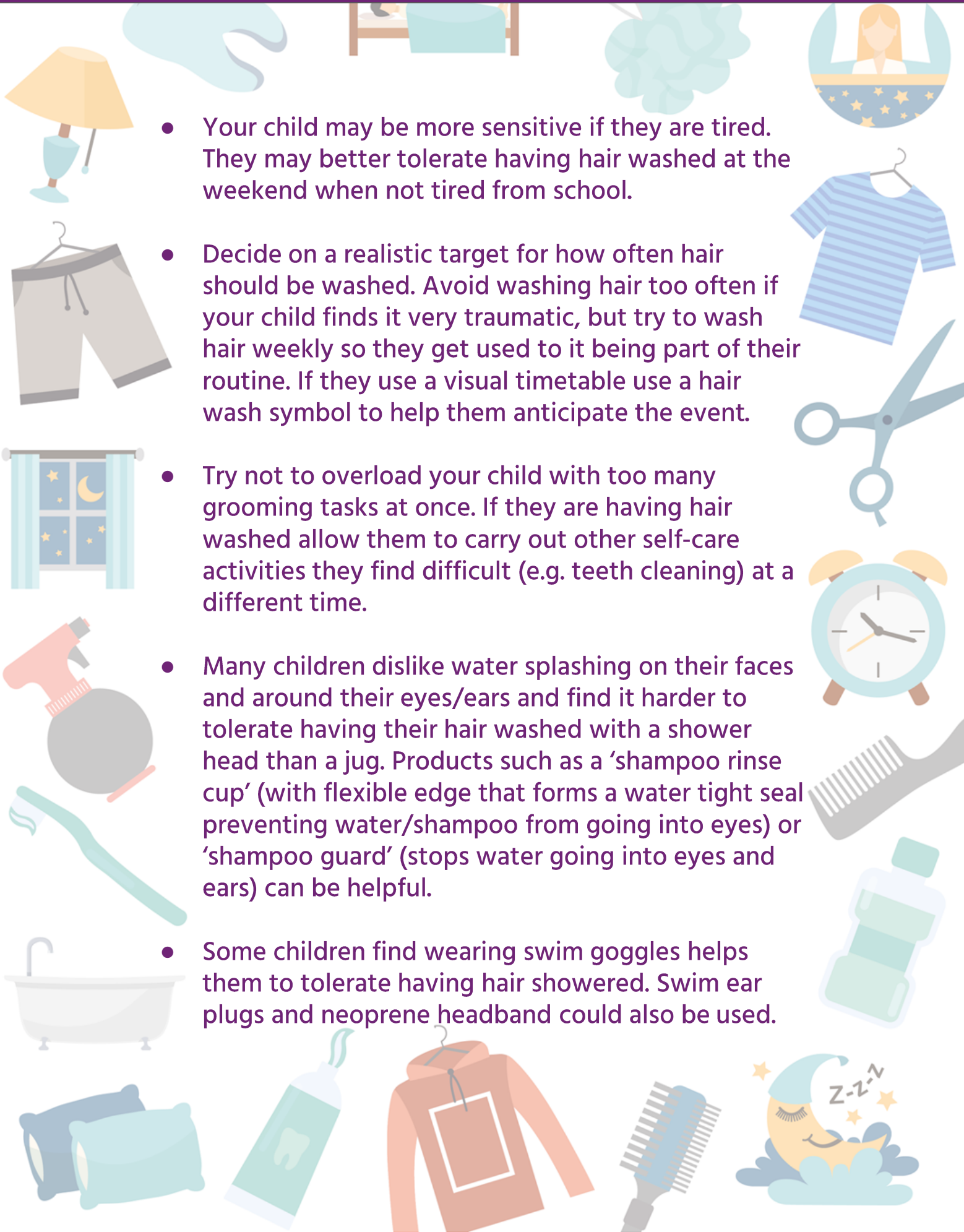


- Your child may be more sensitive if they are tired. They may better tolerate having hair washed at the weekend when not tired from school.
- Decide on a realistic target for how often hair should be washed. Avoid washing hair too often if your child finds it very traumatic, but try to wash hair weekly so they get used to it being part of their routine. If they use a visual timetable use a hair wash symbol to help them anticipate the event.
- Try not to overload your child with too many grooming tasks at once. If they are having hair washed allow them to carry out other self-care activities they find difficult (e.g. teeth cleaning) at a different time.
- Many children dislike water splashing on their faces and around their eyes/ears and find it harder to tolerate having their hair washed with a shower head than a jug. Products such as a 'shampoo rinse cup' (with flexible edge that forms a water tight seal preventing water/shampoo from going into eyes) or 'shampoo guard' (stops water going into eyes and ears) can be helpful.
- Some children find wearing swim goggles helps them to tolerate having hair showered. Swim ear plugs and neoprene headband could also be used.



- If your child is able to assist give them some control over the activity; either choosing the type of shampoo they want, rubbing in the shampoo etc. Some children may prefer to dip their head in the bath water to rinse off the shampoo.
- Try counting down slowly from 5 or singing a short song whilst washing your child's hair to help them anticipate when it will be over.
- Try to keep the environment as quiet and uncluttered as possible to help reduce sensory overload. Limit the number of bath toys and encourage other siblings to give some space.
- Try to remain calm yourself even if your child becomes agitated as a few quiet reassuring words can be helpful. Even if your child's behaviour appears to be very 'over the top', sensory processing difficulties can make hair washing feel a lot more traumatic and your child may not be able to control their reaction.
- Try to work at child's pace to complete self-care tasks.
- If all else fails and your child has short hair, try wetting hair with a damp flannel, then rub in a tiny amount of shampoo and wipe clean with a flannel. Some parents even use baby wipes.



- Using a social story about hair washing can help your child understand why they need to wash their hair which may help them accept it more readily.
- Activities, such as swimming or water play in the garden may also help reduce sensitivity over time (as long as the child enjoys these activities).
- Keep a supply of dry face cloths or small towels to hand so your child can dry their face as soon as hair washing is finished. Small towels/flannels may be less irritating to your child as they will not touch other parts of their body.

Sensory Occupational Therapy Service