



OT: Brushing Protocol

Benefits:

This technique helps the brain and body work together more effectively. Benefits noted are:

- Can improve ability to transition between activities (calming after emotional outburst, improving tolerance levels.)
- Can help children who have a fear of discomfort in being touched (tactile defensiveness)
- Can increase self-regulation, self-calming, and improve attention and focus..
- Can increase the ability of the nervous system to use information from the senses more effectively, i.e. speech/motor skills.

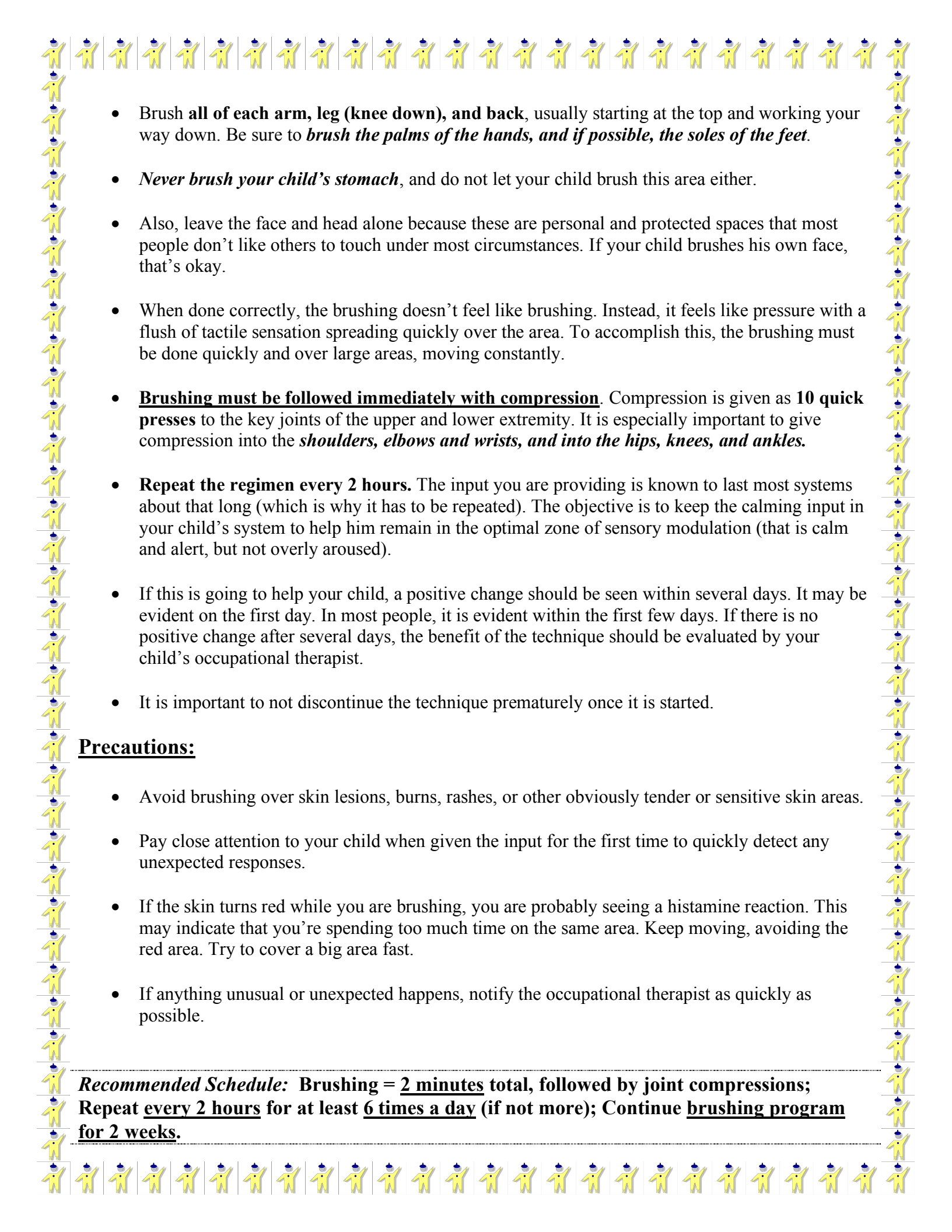
Benefits received are directly related to correct administration and consistency.

The Wilbarger Approach:

- Many people call it a brushing technique because it uses a brush, but it's really much more than that and it doesn't involve brushing. Instead, the key to its successful results is a *pressure touch*.

The technique requires a **specific kind of surgical brush** that does not scratch, tickle, or itch when stroked firmly across the skin. *The pressure on the stroke must be firm enough to bend all the bristles of the brush* and press all of the tactile receptors in the area.

- The “brushing” should be *quick, moving all over, avoiding repeated strokes to the same area*. The objective is to cover a large area quickly and then **follow it immediately with compression/traction to all joints**.
- It is important to *smoothly and evenly apply deep pressure*. Therefore, **hold the brush in a horizontal direction** when going over the skin. Keep it moving. It is best to brush over the skin directly. It can be done through clothing if necessary, but the effectiveness will be diminished (i.e. slower, less dramatic change).
- *Never “scrub”* back and forth over the same area. Take long strokes, turning the limb or moving around so you're stroking all over.

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- Brush **all of each arm, leg (knee down), and back**, usually starting at the top and working your way down. Be sure to **brush the palms of the hands, and if possible, the soles of the feet**.
 - **Never brush your child's stomach**, and do not let your child brush this area either.
 - Also, leave the face and head alone because these are personal and protected spaces that most people don't like others to touch under most circumstances. If your child brushes his own face, that's okay.
 - When done correctly, the brushing doesn't feel like brushing. Instead, it feels like pressure with a flush of tactile sensation spreading quickly over the area. To accomplish this, the brushing must be done quickly and over large areas, moving constantly.
 - **Brushing must be followed immediately with compression**. Compression is given as **10 quick presses** to the key joints of the upper and lower extremity. It is especially important to give compression into the **shoulders, elbows and wrists, and into the hips, knees, and ankles**.
 - **Repeat the regimen every 2 hours**. The input you are providing is known to last most systems about that long (which is why it has to be repeated). The objective is to keep the calming input in your child's system to help him remain in the optimal zone of sensory modulation (that is calm and alert, but not overly aroused).
 - If this is going to help your child, a positive change should be seen within several days. It may be evident on the first day. In most people, it is evident within the first few days. If there is no positive change after several days, the benefit of the technique should be evaluated by your child's occupational therapist.
 - It is important to not discontinue the technique prematurely once it is started.

Precautions:

- Avoid brushing over skin lesions, burns, rashes, or other obviously tender or sensitive skin areas.
- Pay close attention to your child when given the input for the first time to quickly detect any unexpected responses.
- If the skin turns red while you are brushing, you are probably seeing a histamine reaction. This may indicate that you're spending too much time on the same area. Keep moving, avoiding the red area. Try to cover a big area fast.
- If anything unusual or unexpected happens, notify the occupational therapist as quickly as possible.

Recommended Schedule: Brushing = 2 minutes total, followed by joint compressions; Repeat every 2 hours for at least 6 times a day (if not more); Continue brushing program for 2 weeks.
