



Position Paper 6: The use of Talc in Sessions

This policy sets out Theraplay UK's position on the use of talc (talcum powder) in Theraplay® sessions and outlines the reasons for discontinuing its use as well as suggesting safer alternatives and correct disposal procedures. Our aim is to ensure safe and high-quality practice for children, families, and practitioners.

Theraplay UK is committed to providing safe, sensory-rich experiences that support connection and regulation. Due to growing concerns regarding the health, safety, and environmental risks associated with talc, we suggest that talc should no longer be used in sessions with immediate effect. Approved alternatives such as **cornflour** or other non-aerosol, food-grade powders may be used when appropriate and safe.

Health and Safety Concerns

- **Respiratory irritation:** Fine talc particles can be easily inhaled by children and adults, potentially causing coughing, throat irritation, or exacerbation of asthma and other respiratory conditions.
- **Potential long-term health risks:** Although cosmetic-grade talc is regulated, there are ongoing concerns about contamination and the overall safety of repeated inhalation.
- **Skin sensitivity:** Talc may cause irritation for children with eczema, allergies, or sensitive skin.
- **Use:** Talc spreads easily, settling on mats, toys, and surfaces, making cleaning more difficult and increasing the risk of slipping hazards.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Talc is not biodegradable and will remain on surfaces and in the air and disposal via sinks or drains can cause plumbing issues and environmental contamination.

Possible Alternatives

Practitioners may use sensory-safe, food-grade alternatives, including:

- Cornflour/cornstarch
- Rice flour
- Fine-grade craft-safe starch powders (if verified non-toxic and low-dust)

Alternatives must meet the following criteria:

- Non-toxic
- Minimal airborne dust production
- Low risk of respiratory irritation

- Easy to clean
- Environmentally safe to dispose of

Consideration should also be given to potential allergies, including gluten, when choosing a suitable alternative.

Further Guidance for Practitioners

- Introduce alternative powders in small amounts to minimise dust.
- Use shallow trays or contained surfaces to reduce airborne spread.
- Practitioners should encourage children not to blow, throw, or inhale powders.
- Monitor for individual sensitivities or allergies.
- Conduct basic risk assessments when planning sessions involving powders.

Safe Disposal

- Do **not** wash large amounts of powder down sinks or drains.
- Dispose of used or unwanted powder:
 - In general waste (bagged securely), or
 - Compost (for purely food-grade powders like cornflour)
- Clean surfaces with damp cloths rather than dry sweeping to avoid dust becoming airborne.
- Ensure floors are fully cleaned to reduce slipping hazards.

Storage and Transport

- Keep powders in clearly labelled, airtight containers.
- Carry only the minimum amount required for a planned activity.
- Store away from children's reach unless directly supervised.

Communication With Families

Practitioners should briefly explain (if appropriate):

- Why talc is no longer used
- The safety and sensory value of the chosen alternatives
- Document and respond appropriately to any adverse reactions or incidents

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