

Sensory Processing Checklist

Check each description that applies to the child. Use your findings to determine appropriate sensory accommodations to meet their needs.

Tactile Sense

Input from the skin receptors about touch, pressure, temperature, pain, and movement of the hairs on the skin.

Tactile Sensitivity (sensitive to touch)

- Becomes fearful, anxious or aggressive with light or unexpected touch
- As an infant, did/does not like to be held or cuddled; may arch back, cry, and pull away
- Distressed when diaper is being, or needs to be, changed
- Appears fearful of, or avoids standing in close proximity to other people or peers (especially in lines)
- Becomes frightened when touched from behind or by someone/something they can not see (such as under a blanket)
- Complains about having hair brushed; may be very picky about using a particular brush
- Bothered by rough bed sheets (i.e., if old and "bumpy")
- Avoids group situations for fear of the unexpected touch
- Resists friendly or affectionate touch from anyone besides parents or siblings (and sometimes them too!)
- Dislikes kisses, will "wipe off" place where kissed
- Prefers hugs
- A raindrop, water from the shower, or wind blowing on the skin may feel like torture and produce adverse and avoidance reactions
- Overreacts to minor cuts, scrapes, and or bug bites
- Avoids touching certain textures of material (blankets, rugs, stuffed animals)
- Refuses to wear new or stiff clothes, clothes with rough textures, turtlenecks, jeans, hats, or belts, etc.
- Avoids using hands for play
- Avoids/dislikes/aversive to "messy play", i.e., sand, mud, water, glue, glitter, play dough, slime, shaving cream/funny foam etc.
- Distressed by dirty hands and want to wipe or wash them frequently
- Excessively ticklish
- Distressed by seams in socks and may refuse to wear them
- Distressed by clothes rubbing on skin; wants to wear shorts and short sleeves year round, toddlers may prefer to be naked and pull diapers and clothes off constantly
- Wants to wear long sleeve shirts and long pants year round to avoid having skin exposed
- Distressed about having face washed
- Distressed about having hair, toenails, or fingernails cut
- Is a picky eater, only eating certain tastes and textures; mixed textures tend to be avoided as well as hot or cold foods; resists trying new foods
- Refuses to walk barefoot on grass or sand
- Walks on toes

Tactile Hyposensitivity (under-responsive to touch)

- Craves touch, needs to touch everything and everyone
- Is unaware of being touched/bumped unless done with extreme force or intensity
- Is not bothered by injuries, like cuts and bruises, and shows no distress with shots (May even say they love getting shots!)
- Is unaware of hands or face being dirty or that their nose is running
- Is self-abusive; pinching, biting, or banging his own head
- Excessively puts objects in their mouth
- Frequently hurts other children or pets while playing
- Repeatedly touches surfaces or objects that are soothing (i.e., blanket)
- Seeks out surfaces and textures that provide strong tactile feedback
- Thoroughly enjoys and seeks out messy play
- Craves vibrating or strong sensory input
- Has a preference and craving for excessively spicy, sweet, sour, or salty foods

Poor Tactile Perception and Discrimination

- Has difficulty with fine motor tasks such as buttoning, zipping, and fastening clothes
- Is unable to identify which part of their body was touched if they were not looking
- Is afraid of the dark
- Is a messy dresser; looks disheveled, does not notice pants are twisted, shirt is half un tucked, shoes are untied, one pant leg is up and one is down, etc.
- Has difficulty using scissors, crayons, or silverware
- Continues to put objects in their mouth to explore them even after age two
- Has difficulty figuring out physical characteristics of objects; shape, size, texture, temperature, weight, etc.
- Is unable to identify objects by feel and has to use their vision to help; such as when reaching into their backpack or desk to retrieve an item

Vestibular Sense

Input from the inner ear that effects the way an individual experiences movement, changes in gravity, and their position in the space around them.

Vestibular Sensitivity (hypersensitive to movement)

- Avoids and dislikes playground equipment like swings, ladders, slides, and merry-go-rounds
- Prefers tasks with little movement, moves slowly and cautiously, avoids taking risks
- Avoids and dislikes elevators and escalators and may get motion sickness on them; may prefer sitting while riding up and down
- Physically clings to trusted adults
- Appears terrified of falling even when there is no real risk of it
- Is afraid of heights, even short distances such as a curb or step
- Is fearful of their feet leaving the ground
- Is fearful of going up or down stairs or walking on uneven surfaces
- Is afraid of being tipped upside down, sideways, or backwards and strongly resists having their head tilted to wash their hair
- Is startled if someone else moves them such as when pushing their chair closer to the table
- As an infant, did not like baby swings or jumpers
- Is fearful of and has difficulty riding bikes, jumping, hopping, or balancing on one foot (especially if their eyes are closed)
- As an infant, disliked being placed on their stomach
- Loses balance easily and appears to be clumsy
- Is fearful of activities which require balance
- Avoids rapid and rotating movements

Vestibular Under-Sensitivity (hyposensitive to movement)

- Is in constant motion, seems unable to sit still
- Craves fast, spinning, or intense movement experiences
- Loves being tossed into the air
- Could spin for hours and never appear to become dizzy
- Loves fast, intense, and scary amusement park rides
- Is always jumping on furniture, trampolines, spinning in swivel chairs, or hanging upside down
- Loves to swing as high as possible for long periods of time
- Is a thrill-seeker and dangerous at times
- Is always running, jumping, and hopping instead of walking
- Rocks their body, shakes their leg, or shakes their head while sitting
- Enjoys sudden or quick movements such as going over a big bump while riding in the car or on a bike

Poor Muscle Tone and Coordination

- Has a limp or "floppy" body
- Frequently slumps, lies down, or leans their head on their hand or arm while sitting at a desk or table
- Has difficulty simultaneously lifting their head, arms, and legs while lying on their stomach (in a "superman" position)
- Often sits with their legs in a "W" position on the floor to stabilize their body
- Easily becomes fatigued
- Compensates for "looseness" by grasping objects tightly
- Has difficulty with turning doorknobs and handles and opening/closing items
- Has difficulty catching themselves when falling
- Has difficulty with tasks such as fastening, zipping, and buttoning while getting dressed
- As an infant, did not crawl
- Has poor body awareness and bumps into things, knocks things over, and trips often
- Has poor gross motor skills and struggles with jumping, catching a ball, jumping jacks, climbing ladders, etc.
- Has poor fine motor skills and struggles with using tools such as pencils, silverware, combs, scissors, etc.
- Appears to be ambidextrous (using both hands evening) and switches hands for writing, coloring, and cutting. Does not have an established hand preference by 4 to 5 years old.
- Has difficulty with licking an ice cream cone.
- Seems unsure about how to move their body in a new way such as when stepping over something
- Has difficulty learning exercise or dance steps

Proprioceptive Sense

Input from the muscles and joints that helps an individual feel body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in the space around them.

Proprioceptive Under-sensitivity (Sensory Seeking Behaviors)

- Seeks out activities that require jumping, bumping, and crashing
- Stomps their feet while walking
- Kicks their feet on the floor or chair legs while sitting at a desk or table
- Bites or sucks on their fingers or frequently pops their knuckles
- Loves to be tightly wrapped in many blankets or a weighted blanket
- Prefers tight clothing, belts, hoods, and shoelaces
- Enjoys tight bear hugs
- Excessively bangs on objects with another object
- Loves to play rough, tackle, and wrestle
- Frequently throws their body onto the floor
- Enjoys jumping on a trampoline for extended periods of time
- Grinds their teeth throughout the day
- Loves to push, pull, and drag objects
- Jumps off furniture from high places
- Hits, pushes, or bumps into other children
- Chews on pencils, straws, clothing, etc.

Difficulty with "Grading of Movement" (the ability to adjust the amount of pressure and force to place on an object or person)

- Misjudges how much to flex or extend their muscles during tasks such as when putting their arms into sleeves or climbing
- Uses too much or not enough pressure when writing (their writing may be too light to see or they may break the tip of their writing utensil)
- Their written work is messy and they often tear their paper when using an eraser
- Often breaks objects and toys
- Misjudges the weight of objects and drops or spills things
- Does not understand the concepts of heavy and light. Cannot hold two objects and tell you which one weighs more.
- Seems to do everything with too much force (slamming doors, pressing buttons too hard, slamming objects down)
- Uses too much force when playing with other children or animals and may hurt them at times

Auditory Dysfunction

Difficulty hearing and understanding sounds with no diagnosed hearing problem.

Hypersensitivity to Sounds (Auditory Defensiveness)

- Is distracted by sounds others don't normally notice such as humming lights or refrigerators, fans, heaters, or ticking clocks
- Is fearful of the sound of a flushing toilet (especially in public restrooms), vacuums, hairdryers, squeaky shoes, or loud animal noises
- Is startled by or distracted with loud and unexpected sounds
- Is bothered by and distracted with background environmental sounds such as someone mowing outside or crickets continually chirping
- Frequently asks others to stop talking, stop making noise, or stop singing
- Runs away, cries, or covers their ears when they hear a loud and unexpected sound
- Refuses to go into loud areas such as movie theaters, musical concerts, parades, etc.
- Decides whether or not they like certain people based on the sound of the person's voice

Hyposensitivity to Sounds (Auditory System Under-Registers)

- Often doesn't respond to verbal cues or to their name being called
- Appears to make noises just for the sake of making noise
- Loves listening to excessively loud music or TV
- Seems to have difficulty understanding or remembering things spoken to them
- Appears to be oblivious to certain sounds
- Is unable to determine where a sound is coming from
- Talks themselves through a task out loud
- As an infant, had little or no vocalizing or babbling
- Needs directions repeated often and will frequently ask "what?"

Oral Input Dysfunction

Difficulty processing oral stimulation.

Hypersensitivity to Oral Input (Oral Defensiveness)

- Is considered to be a picky eater and has extreme food preferences (will only eat a few foods, is picky about brands, resists trying new foods or restaurants or doesn't like eating at other peoples houses)
- May only eat soft or pureed foods past 24 months of age
- May gag when eating textured foods
- Has difficulty with sucking, chewing, and swallowing. May choke often or have a fear of choking.
- Resists and is fearful of going to the dentist or having dental work done
- Only eats hot foods
- Only eats cold foods
- Refuses to lick things like envelopes or stamps because of the taste
- Dislikes or complains about toothpaste and mouthwash
- Avoids seasoned spicy, sweet, sour, or salty foods. Prefers bland foods

Hyposensitivity to Oral Input (Oral Under-Registers)

- Licks, tastes, and chews on inedible objects
- Prefers foods with intense flavor (excessively spicy, sweet, sour, or salty)
- Drools excessively (past the teething stage)
- Chews on their hair, fingers, or clothing
- Is constantly putting objects in their mouth (past the toddler years)
- Acts as if all food tastes the same
- Adds extra seasoning or condiments to their foods
- Loves vibrating or spinning toothbrushes and enjoys cleanings at the dentist

Olfactory Dysfunction

Difficulty processing smells.

Hypersensitivity to Smells (Over-responsive olfactory system)

- Negatively reacts to and dislikes smells that other people do not generally notice
 - Tells other people or talks about how bad someone smells
- Refuses to eat certain foods because of the smell
 - Is offended or nauseated by bathroom odors and personal hygiene smells
- Is bothered or irritated by the smell of perfume or cologne
- Is bothered by household and cooking smells
 - Refuses to play at someone's house because they dislike the way it smells
- Decides whether or not they like someone or a place depending on how the smell

Hyposensitivity to Smells (Under-responsive olfactory systems)

- Has difficulty determining where an unpleasant odor is coming from
- Accidentally drinks or eats inedible and sometimes poisonous things because they do not notice the noxious smell
- Is unable to identify the smells of scented objects
- Does not notice strong odors others complain about
- Ignores or fails to notice unpleasant odors
- Excessively smells new objects, people, or places
- Smells objects and toys when interacting with them

Visual Input Dysfunction

Difficulty processing visual input with no diagnosed vision impairment or blindness.

Hypersensitivity to Visual Input (Over-responsive visual system)

- Is sensitive to bright lights. Often squints, covers their eyes, cries, and gets headaches from light
Has difficulty keeping their eyes focused on tasks and activities for an appropriate amount of time
- Is easily distracted by other visual stimuli in the environment like decorations, toys, windows, or doorways
Has difficulty concentrating in bright colorful rooms or in dimly lit rooms
- Rubs their eyes and has watery eyes after reading or watching TV
- Avoids making eye contact
Enjoys playing in the dark

Hyposensitivity to Visual Input (Under-responsive visual system or difficulty with tracking, visual discrimination, or visual perception)

- Has difficulty telling the difference between similar printed letters or figures such as p & q, b & d or square and rectangle
- Has a hard time seeing the "big picture" and focuses on the details or patterns within the picture
- Has difficulty locating items among other items such as papers on a desk, clothes in a drawer, items on a grocery shelf, or toys in a bin
- Often loses place when copying from a book or the chalkboard
- Has difficulty controlling eye movement to track and follow moving objects
- Has difficulty telling the difference between different colors, shapes, and sizes
- Often loses his/her place while reading or doing math problems. Makes reversals in words or letters when copying, or reads words backwards such as reading "was" for "saw" and "no" for "on" after first grade
- Complains about "seeing double"
- Has difficulty finding differences in pictures, words, symbols, or objects
- Has difficulty with jigsaw puzzles, copying shapes, and/or cutting/tracing along a line
- Tends to write at a slant (up or down hill) on a page
- Confuses left and right
- Fatigues easily with schoolwork
- Has difficulty judging spatial relationships in the environment and bumps into objects and people or missteps on curbs and stairs

Interoceptive Dysregulation

Difficulty regulating internal sensations.

Internal Regulation

- Becomes too hot or too cold sooner than others in the same environment
- Appears to never get hot or cold and is unable to effectively maintain their body temperature
- Has difficulty in extreme temperatures or going from one extreme temperature to another such as going into an air conditioned building after being outside on a hot day
- Respiration is often too fast or too slow
- Heart rate is too fast or too slow for a given activity such as a high heart rate while sitting still
- Rate of breathing or heart rate takes a long time to slow down after exertion or fear
- Experiences mood swings throughout the day without visible cause
- Unpredictable state of arousal or inability to control hyperactivity or lethargy
- Frequently experiences constipation and diarrhea
- Does not seem to know when they need to use the restroom. Has difficulty with potty training
- Is unable to regulate thirst and is overly thirsty or not thirsty at all
- Is unable to regulate hunger and either eats too often or not at all
- Is unable to determine when they are full or hungry
- Has an eating disorder or failure to thrive