

HealthPoint

Rehabilitation Services • Health and Wellness

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Sensory Processing

What is sensory processing? Sensory processing refers to the way your nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into responses. Simply said sensory processing is how your child processes multiple stimuli from their environment. Some children perceive and respond to sensory information differently than others, resulting in over or under sensitivity to environmental stimuli. One child may be hypersensitive to noises, smells or sights in their environment and have a difficult time processing and filtering out these stimuli, while another child can be under sensitive and lack a response to those same stimuli. There can also be variations in how a child reacts to a certain stimulus such as loud noises, strong smells, tactile touch to their skin, or even bright lights. If a child has difficulty with sensory processing they may also have a poor attention span, demonstrate inappropriate behaviors, be overly active, be lethargic, have difficulty learning or retaining new information, struggle in larger crowds, have deficits with social skills, or even have anxiety in certain situations. Exposure to a variety of stimuli can desensitize, calm their heightened sensitivity and even promote awareness to different stimuli. Below you will find a list of sensory stimulating activities that address your child's tactile sensation, oral/motor sensation, vestibular/movement sensation, visual stimulation, and proprioceptive sensation. Supervision and assessment will be needed when exposing your child to different stimuli. Assess their response to each stimulus and adjust exposure accordingly to their response. You can use more stimulating activities if your child responds well or decrease the amount and severity of the activities when your child responds poorly to stimuli. A good response to exposure to different stimuli would be a calmer demeanor, engagement in visual focus to objects, more appropriate behaviors, or even decreased signs of anxiety in certain situations.

Touch/Deep pressure Activities:

1. Swaddle your child with a blanket or body sock
2. Give your child a bear hugs
3. Give your child back scratches
4. Give your child a massage with or without lotion
5. Provide Joint compressions: Apply pressure through all joints in the arms and legs with a gentle upwards pressure while supporting each joint.



6. Try therapy brushing: Wilbarger protocols using a soft plastic brush, brushing along arms and legs 2-3 mins with an up/down approach.
7. Give a warm baths
8. Scrub your child with a washcloth or scrubby during bath time
9. Play with water: Fill bins with water and place floating objects in water
10. Explore various textures such as low-grade sandpaper, Velcro, non-slip materials
11. Jump on a “crash pad”: You can make your own “crash pad” at home with a mattress, couch cushions, or pillow for child to jump onto
12. Log rolling
13. Use hand fidgets
14. Play with stuffed toys
15. Use fingerpaint
16. Use glitter glue
17. Use foamy soap when washing your hands
18. Play with shaving cream or whipped cream
19. Pet a dog, cat, or other animals
20. Mix cookie dough or cake batter
21. Try a weighted blanket, vest or lap pad. You can purchase a pre-made weighted lap pad or blanket or you can make your own by sewing fabrics with fishing weights, beans or rice inside.
22. “Sandwich” your child between pillows
23. Climb under sofa cushions
24. Play in a sandbox
25. Use Play-doh, therapy putty, slime, silly putty or clay
26. Make a sensory bin with dry rice, beans or other materials around the home
27. Help with gardening
28. Try vibrating pens, balls, pillows, teethers and toothbrushes



Movement & Proprioception:

1. Rock your child in your arms, on a hobby horse or rocking chair
2. Play horsey on your knee
3. Crawl on hands and knees
4. Army crawl with full body
5. Walk, Run, March or Jump
6. Dance to music
7. Try animal walks like bear crawls, frog hops, crab walks and bunny hops
8. Complete strengthening exercises like jumping jacks, floor push ups, wall push ups and sit ups
9. Play on the playground: Try using swings, monkey bars and slides
10. Climb stairs and ladders
11. Jump on mini-trampoline
12. Use a Sit n' Spin or Dizzy Disc Jr.
13. Bounce on a therapy ball or hoppity ball
14. Sit on an inflatable seat cushions
15. Ride a bike, scooter or skateboard
16. Push a grocery cart or stroller
17. Try yoga exercises
18. Roll down a hill, do cartwheels or somersaults
19. Play catch with a ball or balloon
20. Play hopscotch



Looking & Vision:

1. Look at mobiles, lava lamps or bubble lamps
2. Hang up colored Christmas lights
3. Place toys in opaque containers
4. Look at photos
5. Look at picture books
6. Look at nature: Observe fish tanks, farms, zoos
7. Watch cartoons and movies
8. Play games and activities that develop visual skills like mazes, dot-to-dots, I Spy, drawing and flashlight tag



Smell, Taste & Oral Motor:

1. Try using essential oils and scented candles
2. Smell flowers
3. Play a blindfold smelling game and see who can guess the item correctly
4. Explore tastes: Try foods that are sweet, salty, sour, spicy, bitter
5. Eat frozen, cool or warm foods
6. Explore textures: Try foods that are crunchy, creamy, chewy, lumpy
7. Chew gum or suck on a lollipop
8. Blow bubbles
9. Suck thick liquids through a straw
10. Use age appropriate “chewy” toys



Check out these websites for more sensory supporting activities for your child:

- ★ <https://teachingmama.org/>
- ★ <https://handsonaswegrow.com/sensory-activities-for-kids/>
- ★ <https://lemonlimeadventures.com/12-sensory-play-ideas-to-encourage-hands-on-learning/>
- ★ <https://www.howweelearn.com/sensory-activities-for-toddlers/>
- ★ <http://onetimethrough.com/simple-sensory-activities-15-minutes/>