

Sensory Diet

Every Child's Sensory Needs are Different

Sensory processing is a term that refers to the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into appropriate responses.

How a sensory diet can help. Sensory processing difficulties can occur when sensory signals don't get organized into appropriate responses. A child with sensory processing difficulties may be under- or over-responsive to different information in their environment that they take in through their senses. A sensory diet is intended to help a child meet their sensory needs. Receiving either more or less of a certain type of input may calm their body and mind and ultimately allow them to experience life more fully.



The following table can provide you with ideas to create a sensory diet for your child.

What Behavior You're Seeing:	What Child is Seeking:	What Activities to Use to Provide Needed Input:
<i>Putting things or fingers into mouth, shirt chewing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactile input to the mouth, lips, cheeks or face. • Oral motor input from having finger in mouth • Proprioceptive/deep pressure input to the face or mouth if pressing fingers to face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrating toy to face, cheeks, inside mouth • Use wash cloth to brush face from cheeks to lips, from nose to chin, chin to nose • Provide chewy food that will provide proprioceptive input to the mouth (gummy fruits, gum, dried fruits) • Eat crunchy foods (apple, carrots, crunchy cereal) • Provide straw to chew on • Practice oral motor skills such as blowing cotton balls or small craft balls across floor
<i>Pinching, scratching, kneading skin</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactile input to the fingers and fingertips • Proprioceptive/deep pressure to the fingers and hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrating toy to hands • Fidget toy that child can squeeze • Provide squeezes and deep pressure to fingers and hands when child is seeking input • Pop bubble wrap • Teach child to give hand squeezes to self

<i>Running and crashing onto objects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proprioceptive input to the body when crashing • Vestibular input while running 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide squishes/tight hugs to body • Make a “Kiddo Burrito:” Have child lay on stomach and provide deep pressure to body while adding different “ingredients.” • Structured running/crashing game, incorporating “stop” “go” instructions. • Crashing onto couch or pillows.
<i>Touching self, peers or objects inappropriately</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking tactile input to hands • Seeking proprioceptive input through joints if pushing against peers/objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage pulling and pushing using weighted wagon, cart, box, or laundry basket • Wheelbarrow walking, crab walking • Use pulling apart resistant toy- Legos, snap beads, stretchy toys, exercise bands • Use fidget toys • Play with resistive putty, Play-Doh, or model magic • Fill a balloon with sand or Play-Doh for child to play with • Search for objects in box or rice, beans, or sand
<i>Excessive jumping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking proprioceptive input through joints • Seeking vestibular input via up and down movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jump on trampoline, or jumping on floor • Have child lay on back, bend and extend legs • Carry heavy items- groceries, boxes, books • Sit on scooter board, pull self with legs • Bury child under pillows or cushions, have them push or squeeze out • Bounce on a tire swing • Kick a soccer ball or large exercise ball
<i>Inability to sit still at table or maintain static position</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking movement through body • May need to use bathroom • May be using movement as an avoidant strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide movement break, wall pushes, wheelbarrow walking, crab walking • Squish between pillows • Provide deep pressure massage to upper extremities and back • Sit with weighted animal or pillow on lap • Sit with teddy bear to hug • Snuggle in a bean bag chair or pillow • Place textured material in desk to touch and feel • Encourage slow, deep, rhythmic breathing to help calm body down • Set attainable goal to remain still (Sit at desk to string 5 beads, or “if you can sit nicely during attendance you can hand out _____”)

Resources:

Adapted from: <http://spdfoundation.net/about-sensory-processing-disorder.html>

Picture from: <http://questgarden.com/>

