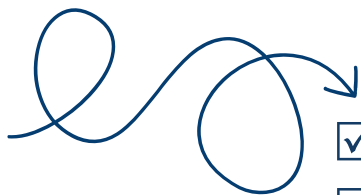


# SENSORY DIET

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THE

## Sensory SYSTEMS



- PROPRIOCEPTION
- VESTIBULAR
- TACTILE
- GUSTATORY

- AUDITORY
- OLFACTORY
- VISUAL



SENSORY STRATEGIES,  
ACTIVITIES & PRACTICAL WAYS  
to

INCORPORATE SENSORY INPUT

# PROPRIOCEPTION

THE SENSE THAT HELPS A CHILD WITH BODY AWARENESS IS KNOWN AS PROPRIOCEPTION.



Intact proprioception allows a child to determine his/her body's position in space and regulate the direction and amount of force to use when moving. This sense is detected through sensory receptors in the joints and muscles.

The proprioceptive sense is stimulated when a child experiences pressure or moves his/her limbs to push, pull, lift or hang. While engaging in activities that offer proprioceptive input, a child may also show improved attention and a more regulated arousal level. This is beneficial for learning, playing, socializing, and completing daily tasks.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.

## PROPRIOCEPTION SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

- Make a "Sandwich" or "Burrito" = Roll child up in a blanket keeping face and head exposed. Firmly, yet gently roll a ball on child's legs and back. Or, press with your hands.
- Pull a wagon or heavy objects
- Push a wagon or heavy objects
- Carry heavy objects
- Wear a weighted back pack (filled with toys or books)
- Jump up and down on the floor
- Trampoline
- Play jump rope
- Use a child size hammer - golf tees into firm foam
- Wall push-ups, floor push-ups, or chair push-ups
- Bear hugs
- Climb under sofa cushions
- Hang from monkey bars
- Play hopscotch
- Vacuum
- Sweep
- Put heavy groceries away
- Shovel snow, dirt, sand, etc.
- Use play dough, kinetic sand, or clay-roll, pound and knead
- Rake leaves
- Climb on playground equipment
- Hike up a hill
- Play tug of war
- Eat crunchy food or ice chips
- Walk backwards
- Make & throw snowballs
- Play catch with a weighted/heavy ball
- Move furniture
- Fall into a bean bag chair
- Swim
- Practice Animal Walks (crab, bear, snake, etc.)
- Wheel-barrow walk
- Use your arms to roll a large ball up and down the wall
- Bite on a chewy
- Use therapy putty for hands
- March in place
- Yoga Poses
- Weighted Blanket
- Wear a weighted and/or pressure vest
- Stacking Chairs
- Resistance/Exercise Bands
- Jumping Jacks
- Foot Fidgets (Stretchy Bands across chair legs)

# VESTIBULAR

## THE VESTIBULAR SENSE DETECTS MOVEMENT THROUGH SENSORY RECEPTORS IN THE INNER EAR.



This sense tells a child when he/she is moving, and the direction and speed of that movement. Vestibular activities and input help children develop their posture, balance, and coordination. This sense provides us with gravitational security: the feeling that we can maintain a position without falling. When we move our heads, fluid in our inner ears moves and shifts, providing information about the position of our body and head in space.

Difficulty with vestibular processing can result in a child who needs to move constantly to feel satisfied or a child who is fearful of movement because it makes them feel insecure or unbalanced. It can also result in difficulty coordinating and planning motor tasks.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.

## VESTIBULAR SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

- Use a scooter board
- Swing on a hammock
- Swing on a tire swing
- Merry Go Round
- Trampoline
- Slides
- Rocking Chair
- Dance (wiggle, spin, sway, twirl, shake)
- Jumping jacks
- Animal Walks
- Sledding
- Skating
- Swimming
- Ride a bike or other wheeled vehicle
- Spin (sit n' spin)
- Therapy ball ("airplane")
- Roll on the floor or down a hill
- Roll along a wall while standing
- Roll in a barrel
- Ride a rocking horse
- Crawling or creeping
- Jumping over obstacles or rope
- Bounce or rock while on a ball
- Place an inflated cushion on chair for movement
- Hoppity Hop Ball
- Sit on T-Stool
- Somersault
- Hang upside down from playground equipment
- Play "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes"
- Cartwheels
- Scooter board on a ramp

# TACTILE

THE TACTILE SENSE HELPS A CHILD DETECT LIGHT TOUCH, DEEP PRESSURE, TEXTURE, TEMPERATURE, VIBRATION, AND PAIN.



This sense is detected through receptors in the skin. Information from this sense allows a child to feel when he/she is being touched and the quality of that touch. It also allows a child to determine what he/she is touching without the use of their vision.

Difficulty in tactile perception can have significant impact on a child's emotional well-being. Tactile activities and input help children develop body awareness, hand use skills, and motor planning.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.

## TACTILE SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

- Finger Paint
- Craft projects (with wet glue, feathers, etc.)
- Foam Soap or Shaving Cream
- Sand play
- Floam
- Relax in a bean bag chair
- Cornstarch and water mixture
- Play dough or clay
- Swaddle/Bear Hugs
- Skin massage with or without lotion
- Pop bubbles with fingers
- Cook with an adult (touching food)
- Bake with an adult (rolling or kneading dough with hands)
- Crawl through a tunnel
- Sensory bin with dry rice, beans, corn, lentils, or other materials
- Get inside a sleeping bag
- Jump in a pile of leaves
- Walk bare foot in sand, grass, or leaves
- Water Play
- Touch and feel books
- Relax in a soft, fluffy, warm blanket (from the clothes dryer)
- Draw or print on a sand tray
- Play in sink or tub of water
- Creep or crawl over textured surfaces
- Use a rechargeable/battery operated toothbrush that vibrates
- Use a hand massager
- Heavy rub down with towel
- Vibrating pen
- Kinetic Sand
- Brushing Protocol
- Joint Compressions
- Jump on crash pad
- Weighted Blanket
- Weighted Vest
- Weighted Lap Pad
- Make a "Sandwich" or "Burrito" = Roll child up in a blanket keeping face and head exposed. Firmly, yet gently roll a ball on child's legs and back. Or, press with your hands.

# GUSTATORY

## THE GUSTATORY SENSE HELPS A CHILD DETECT AND PERCEIVE TASTE.



This sense allows a child to discriminate between food flavors and tastes, such as sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and savory. Taste is received through taste buds and receptor cells on the tongue.

Difficulty in gustatory processing might cause your child to be a very picky eater or crave oral input. Therefore, demonstrating challenging behaviors during meal time.

Gustatory activities and input help children to acquire eating and drinking habits as well as further categorize or identify foods based on their respective taste, texture, temperature or sense of smell.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.



## GUSTATORY SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

\* Some of these textures will present a choking hazard for some children.

\* Only offer textures that a child can safely bite, chew, and swallow.

\* Be aware of food allergies and diet restrictions. Only offer food that can be safely consumed.

- Explore textures- smooth, lumpy, crunchy, chewy
- Explore tastes- sweet, sour, salty, spicy, bitter
- Explore temperature- warm, cool, cold
- Chew Gum
- Suck on an orange
- Lick or suck on a lemon
- Lick a lollipop
- Crunch on a cold pickle
- Crunch on a pretzel
- Suck apple sauce through a straw
- Suck a milkshake through a narrow straw
- Use cookie cutters to make cheese slice creations and eat
- Make funny shaped sandwiches and eat
- Use flavored lip balms
- Scratch and Sniff stickers
- Popsicles

# AUDITORY

## THE AUDITORY SENSE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HEARING.

This sense helps a child detect the pitch, loudness, and timbre of a noise or sound. This sense also allows us to take in sound information, process it, and generate an appropriate response.

It determines if a sound is dangerous and alerting or quiet and calm. This sense is important for listening skills, communication, and social skills.

Difficulties with the auditory system can result in misinterpreting information or missing parts of sentences. It can also result in being overwhelmed or frightened by certain sounds.

When these sounds occur the child may cover their ears or duck their head. Other children may not hear the sounds around them which results in them always making sounds, humming, or singing.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.



## AUDITORY SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

- Singing
- Blow whistles
- Play a kazoo
- Listening to music
- Bang a drum
- Musical Instruments: rhythms sticks, tambourine, piano, bells, cymbals, triangle, etc.
- Play sound Bingo game
- Listen and Name – identify things by sound only
- Rain Stick
- Sound Machine
- Noise Cancelling Headphones
- White noise machine
- Listen to Nature (beach, rain, etc.)
- Aquarium
- Water Fountain
- BOP it
- Sound Puzzles
- Quiet Retreat

# OLFACTORY

THIS SENSE HELPS US TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THOUSANDS OF DIFFERENT ODORS AND DETERMINE IF THEY ARE DANGEROUS, FOUL, PLEASURABLE, STRONG, OR FAINT.

Sensory receptors in our nose pick up information about the odors around us and send the information to our brain. This system also help create the flavors we taste in food. Our sense of smell is linked to our memories and can affect our mood. This sense is also protective against toxins and other odor omitting substances.

Difficulty in processing olfactory information can result in children who crave smells and may not understand safe vs dangerous smells.

Other children may gag from smells that most people don't notice or consider unpleasant. Children with an aversion to smells may have trouble at meal times.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.



## OLFACTORY SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

- Use scented markers and crayons
- Use herbs and spices in craft projects
- Smell essential oils:
  - Calming: Vanilla and Lavender may be calming
  - Alerting: Peppermint and Citrus may be alerting
- Diffuser Oils Bracelet or Necklace
- Smell flowers
- Blindfold smelling game
- Use flavored lip balms
- Scratch and Sniff stickers
- Scented Bubbles
- Scented dough
- Scented lotions

# VISUAL

## THE VISUAL SENSE HELPS A CHILD TO SEE AND DETECT OBJECTS.



The sense of vision uses the eyes to collect information in which the brain then interprets. The visual system works closely with the other senses to help us safely navigate and locate objects in our environments.

Visual activities and input help children develop visual perception skills, engage in visual tracking, and improve visual attention and eye muscle control.

Difficulties with visual processing may significantly impact your child's academic achievement.

These activities may help calm a given child, or may alert or energize a child. Each child is unique.

Gently encourage your child to participate; never force or coerce him/her.

Consult with your child's therapist for specific recommendations regarding which activities are suitable for his/her age and individual needs.

## VISUAL SENSORY DIET ACTIVITIES:

- Hoberman Sphere = collapsing and expanding
- Kaleidoscope
- Finger Lights
- Glow Sticks
- Liquid Timer
- Lava Lamp, Mobiles, Bubble Lamps
- Fish Tank
- Light Projector
- Sensory Bottles or Jars
- Play "I Spy"
- Play "flashlight tag"
- Mazes, Dot-to-Dot
- Light Table
- Bubbles
- Colored Light Bulbs
- High Quality Sunglasses for outdoors
- Tinted Lenses for indoors if sensitive to glare
- Wide brim Hat or Visor
- Leave out 5-10 toys at a time to avoid visual overload
- Reconsider complicated prints and patterns on clothing, walls, etc.
- Avoid fluorescent bulbs
- "Safe Space" with minimal visuals
- Dim lights for calming and relaxation