



Community Children's
Health Partnership



Sensory Processing Differences

**Top Tips from
Speech & Language Therapy**

Service provided by


Sirona
care & health



Some children and young people process sensory information in a different way. This can have a significant effect on how a person makes sense of the world.


A person with sensory processing differences may be either:


- Hypo sensitive to any of their senses
(this means under sensitive)
- Hyper sensitive to any of their senses
(this means over sensitive)
- A combination of both.



Understanding a person's responses to sensory information (their sensory profile) can help us to think about what changes need to be made. Often, small changes to the environment or the way an activity is carried out can make a big difference to avoiding anxiety and emotional outbursts.

Sense	Response
<p>Sight</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced depth of perception, leading to difficulties with throwing or catching, blurred vision. <li>• Missing information. <p>You could try: Think about lighting, use specialist visual supports. Repeat and discuss key information.</p>
	<p>Hyper-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily distracted by small details, becomes easily overwhelmed with visual information. <li>• Finds it difficult to sleep unless lighting is correct. <p>You could try: Think about lighting – is it too bright? Use a workstation – a space or desk with high sides to block out visual distractions. Use black out curtains/eye mask for sleep.</p>

Sense	Response
<p>Sound</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having music on loud, enjoying loud banging. • Seeking out noisy environments. <p>You could try: Think about: noise levels in class and at home; include enjoyable, noisy activities within activities. Use social stories to explain when quiet time is appropriate..</p> <hr/> <p>Hyper-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding certain sounds painful • Noticing noises that other people may not. • Finding noisy environments difficult to tolerate. <p>You could try: Think about noise levels in class and at home. Identify a quiet spot for taking a break. Use aids such as ear defenders or headphones with calming music/sounds.</p>
<p>Smell</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks out strong smells • Sniffs objects. <p>You could try: In children ensure that the strong smells being sought out are appropriate and replace with an alternative where not. Placing favoured smells on a hanky or sleeve can be reassuring.</p> <hr/> <p>Hyper-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty coping with strong smells like perfume, toilet smells and food smells. <p>You could try: Use unscented products. Think about making environments as fragrance-free as possible. Social stories may be useful.</p>

Sense	Response
<p>Taste</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks out strong tastes e.g. extra pepper, chillies, orange peel. • May eat non-food items e.g. stones, mud. <p>You could try: Eating strong tasting food is fine as long as a child has a balanced diet. Use simple factual information or social stories to reinforce the idea of a balanced diet, or to discourage eating non-foods. Find safe alternatives to non-food items e.g. chewy toy.</p> <hr/> <p>Hyper-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very sensitive to tastes and textures which can lead to a restricted diet. <p>You could try: Eating bland food is fine as long as a child has a balanced diet. Use simple factual information or social stories to reinforce the idea of a balanced diet.</p>

Sense	Response
<p>Touch</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys pressure, tight fitting clothing, heavy blankets. • Finds it hard to know when mouth is full. • Chews objects or clothing. • Experiences heat, pain and cold differently <p>You could try: Use weighted blankets, and sensory chew toys. Use simple factual information and social stories to support in other areas e.g. when it is time to take your jumper off; taking small bites of food when eating. Give alternatives e.g. chewy toys.</p> <hr/> <p>Hyper sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discomfort at being touched. • Sensitive to certain fabrics, labels etc. • Dislikes hair washing/hair brushing. • Dislikes certain textures of food. • Experiences heat, pain and cold differently <p>You could try: Be aware that not everyone enjoys touch. Adapt clothes or choose textures that are comfortable. Allow a child to brush or wash their own hair. Introduce new textures slowly.</p>

Sense	Response
<p>Balance (vestibular)</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to rock, swing, spin to get sensory input. <p>You could try: Make moving activities part of the daily routine e.g. rocking horses, swings, roundabouts, seesaws.</p> <hr/> <p>Hyper-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties with activities like sport where we need to control our movements. <p>You could try: Break down activities into small, more easily manageable steps with a clear start and finish to lessen anxiety.</p>
<p>Body Awareness (proprioception)</p> 	<p>Hypo-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May stand too close to others without realising or bump into people or objects. <p>You could try: Use the 'arm's-length rule' to judge personal space. Adapt environment to make obstacles more obvious and walkways wide and clear.</p> <hr/> <p>Hyper-sensitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine motor difficulties e.g. doing up buttons and laces. <p>You could try: You could help by offering 'fine motor' activities.</p>

For more information see:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/sensory-world.aspx>

<http://sensory-processing.middletonautism.com/>

The following websites sell sensory toys and equipment.

- www.sensorytoywarehouse.com
- www.specialneedstoys.com
- www.rompa.com
- www.specialdirect.com

For advice on using social stories

- www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx

Advice and Support

For further advice and support from a Speech & Language Therapist, please contact us via our Telephone Advice Line 07825 016 335 (Wednesdays 9am-12pm) or by email sirona.slt@nhs.net

This service is provided by Sirona care & health as part of the Community Children's Health Partnership

Let us know what you think and get involved

T: 0300 124 5300* **E:** sirona.hello@nhs.net

W: www.sirona-cic.org.uk

*Calls from landlines are charged up to 10p per minute; calls from mobiles vary, please check with your network provider. This is not a premium-rate number.

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