

What you can do to help

- ◆ Reduce sensory challenges in your child's environment where possible. Consider what situations, places or activities actively stimulate your child's interest and energy and what changes might make other situations fun, engaging and enticing for your child. Your child may be less responsive in certain situations or environments. If this happens, think about how you could foster interaction that excites your child to participate socially or be actively interested. It is not always possible to reduce environmental challenges, when this happens consider strategies e.g. having an audiobook, a crunchy snack and a fiddle toy available on a car journey, so that your child can benefit from the experience.
- ◆ Introduce alerting strategies (see strategies leaflets).

Everyone is different and not all strategies will be effective for your child. Please note that there is limited evidence that some of the strategies work for all children. Observing how your child behaves in different environments will give you an indication of what they may find alerting.

Useful Resources

"Sensational Kids: Hope and Help for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder" by Lucy Jane Miller

Children's rights

We are committed to upholding the rights of all children.

Child protection

We respect the need for confidentiality. The exception to this is when there are concerns about child protection. In these cases, having discussed our concerns with you, we would liaise with social care in accordance with Oxfordshire's safeguarding children procedures.

Leaflet created by Early Years Autism Project

Sensory Strategies: Sensory Under- Sensitivity



Reacting to different sensations and activities

We all understand and respond to information from the world around us in different ways. This is normal and part of what makes us individual. Young children in particular, may have a heightened response to some sensations and this can be part of normal development. We learn about the world through our senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. There are two other senses: 'proprioception' (body awareness) and 'vestibular' (balance and movement).

Some children may show a heightened or dampened response to some sensations which can indicate a sensory sensitivity. However, it is important to remember that having a sensitivity in one area, during certain times of the day, does not always indicate a sensory sensitivity. Many children under the age of five, with no sensory processing issues, will find parts of their daily routing difficult e.g. bath time, hair brushing, visiting the supermarket and loud or unpredictable noises.

Many children with autism have sensory sensitivities, displaying either heightened or reduced responses to sensation (or a mixture of both). You may recognise a cluster of these responses in your child and may find the suggested strategies helpful.



- Doesn't notice when name is being called
- Poor discrimination of sounds
- Produces self-generated noises to keep alert



- Spinning objects near eyes
- Standing very near to the TV
- Blinking, over-stretch, roll or screws eyes up
- Craves intense input e.g. computer games

- Craves strong flavours or variety
- Mouths or chews objects
- Overfills mouth when eating



- Always touching objects and people
- Hurts themselves without noticing
- Does not notice when face is messy



- Constant movement, such as spinning
- Like 'rough' play
- Hangs upside down
- Never gets dizzy



- Sniffs objects and people
- Does not seem to notice smells



Your child may be unaware of some sensations and may delay before responding, responses may be muted or less intense than you would expect. They may lack body awareness and appear clumsy. Those around them may describe as:

Apathetic or often exhausted

Difficult to engage in conversation

Slow to respond to instructions

Uninterested or incurious

Passive, quiet or withdrawn

Lacking inner drive or being 'in their world'