



Sensory Checklist for Identification & Referral Only

Signs of Proprioceptive Dysfunction:

Proprioceptive Sense: input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.

1. Sensory Seeking Behaviors:

- seeks out jumping, bumping, and crashing activities
- kicks his/her feet on floor or chair while sitting at desk/table
- bites or sucks on fingers and/or frequently cracks his/her knuckles
- prefers clothes (and belts, hoods, shoelaces) to be as tight as possible
- loves/seeks out "squishing" activities
- enjoys bear hugs; loves to be wrapped in many or weighted blankets
- excessive banging on/with toys and objects
- loves "roughhousing" and tackling/wrestling games
- frequently falls on floor intentionally
- would jump on a trampoline for hours on end
- grinds his/her teeth throughout the day
- loves pushing/pulling/dragging objects
- loves jumping off furniture or from high places
- frequently hits, bumps or pushes other children
- chews on pens, straws, shirt sleeves etc.

2. Difficulty With "Grading of Movement":

- misjudges how much to flex and extend muscles during tasks/activities
- difficulty regulating pressure when writing/drawing; written work is messy
- always seems to be breaking objects and toys
- misjudges the weight of an object; complaining about objects being too heavy
- seems to do everything with too much force (i.e., walking, slamming doors, slamming objects down)

Social, Emotional, Play, And Self-Regulation Dysfunction:

Social:

- prefers playing by self with objects or toys rather than with people
- functions best in small group or individually
- others have a hard time interpreting child's cues, needs, or emotions
- does not seek out connections with familiar people

Emotional:

- difficulty accepting changes in routine (to the point of tantrums)
- gets easily frustrated
- variable and quickly changing moods; prone to outbursts and tantrums
- difficulty appropriately making needs known

Play:

- difficulty with imitative play (over 10 months)
- needs adult guidance to play, difficulty playing independently (over 18 months)
- participates in repetitive play for hours; i.e., lining up toys cars, blocks, watching one movie over and over etc.

Self-Regulation:

- can't calm or soothe self through pacifier, comfort object, or caregiver
- requires excessive help from caregiver to fall asleep; i.e., rubbing back or head, rocking, long walks, or car rides

Internal Regulation (The Interoceptive Sense):

- becoming too hot or too cold sooner than others in the same environments; may not appear to ever get cold/hot, may not be able to maintain body temperature effectively
- respiration and heart rate that takes longer than what is expected to slow down during or after exertion or fear
- severe/several mood swings throughout the day (angry to happy in short periods of time, without visible cause)
- unpredictable state of arousal or inability to control arousal level (i.e., hyper to lethargic)
- does not seem to know when they need the bathroom; cannot feel the sensation that bowel or bladder are full
- unable to regulate hunger and/or thirst; seems hunger/thirst is constant, nonexistent, or oscillates back and forth
- has little to no appetite and/or will be "starving" one minute then full two bites later, then back to hungry again

Signs of Tactile Dysfunction

Sense: input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.

1. Hypersensitivity To Touch (Defensiveness)

- becomes fearful, anxious or aggressive with light or unexpected touch
- resists friendly or affectionate touch from anyone besides parents or siblings (and sometimes them too!)
- a raindrop, water from the shower, or wind blowing on the skin produces adverse and avoidance reactions
- may overreact to minor cuts, scrapes, and or bug bites
- avoids touching certain textures of material; refuses to wear clothes with rough textures; refuses certain types of clothes: turtlenecks, jeans, hats, or belts, etc.
- avoids/dislikes/aversive to "messy play": sand, mud, water, glue, glitter, playdoh, slime, etc.
- will be distressed by dirty hands and want to wipe or wash them frequently
- excessively ticklish
- distressed by seams in socks and may refuse to wear them
- distressed about having face washed; hair brushed; hair, toenails, or fingernails cut
- may refuse to walk barefoot on grass or sand
- may walk on toes only

2. Hyposensitivity To Touch (Under-Responsive):

- may crave touch; repeatedly touches surfaces that are soothing (i.e., blanket)
- is not bothered by injuries, like cuts and bruises
- may not be aware that hands or face are dirty, may not feel their nose running
- may be self-abusive; pinching, biting, or banging his own head
- frequently hurts other children or pets while playing
- thoroughly enjoys and seeks out messy play

3. Poor Tactile Perception And Discrimination:

- may not be able to identify which part of their body was touched if they were not looking
- may be afraid of the dark
- may be a messy dresser; looks disheveled, does not notice clothes are twisted, shoes are untied, etc
- has difficulty figuring out physical characteristics of objects (i.e., shape, size, texture, temperature, weight)

Signs of Vestibular Dysfunction:

Vestibular Sense: input from the inner ear about equilibrium, gravitational changes, movement experiences, and position in space.

1. Hypersensitivity To Movement (Over-Responsive):

- avoids/dislikes playground equipment; i.e., swings, ladders, slides, or merry-go-rounds
- prefers sedentary tasks, moves slowly and cautiously, avoids taking risks
- avoids/dislikes elevators and escalators; may prefer sitting while they are on them
- fearful of feet leaving the ground
- afraid of being tipped upside down, sideways or backwards; will strongly resist getting hair washed over the sink
- startles if someone else moves them; i.e., pushing his/her chair closer to the table
- may be fearful of or have difficulty riding a bike, jumping, or balancing on one foot
- loses balance easily and may appear clumsy

2. Hyposensitivity To Movement (Under-Responsive):

- in constant motion, can't seem to sit still (rocks body or shakes leg while sitting)
- could spin for hours and never appear to be dizzy
- always jumping on furniture, trampolines, spinning in a swivel chair, or getting into upside down positions
- loves to swing as high as possible and for long periods of time
- is a "thrill-seeker"; loves the fast, intense, and/or scary rides at amusement parks

3. Poor Muscle Tone And/Or Coordination:

- frequently slumps, lies down, and/or leans head on hand or arm while working at his/her desk
- difficulty simultaneously lifting head, arms, and legs off the floor while lying on stomach ("superman" position)
- often sits in a "W sit" position on the floor to stabilize body
- fatigues easily!
- difficulty turning doorknobs, handles, opening and closing items
- difficulty catching self if falling (often observed by scrapes on knees but not on hands)
- has poor body awareness; bumps into things, knocks things over, trips, and/or appears clumsy
- poor gross motor skills; jumping, catching a ball, jumping jacks, climbing a ladder etc.
- poor fine motor skills; difficulty using "tools" (pencils, silverware, combs, scissors, fastening zippers/buttons)
- may appear ambidextrous, frequently switching hands for coloring, cutting, writing etc.; does not have an established hand preference/dominance by 4 or 5 years old

Signs Of Oral Input Dysfunction:

1. Hypersensitivity To Oral Input (Oral Defensiveness):

- picky eater, often with extreme food preferences; i.e., limited repertoire of foods, picky about brands
- may gag with textured foods; or may only eat "soft" or pureed foods (over 24 months of age)
- has difficulty with sucking, chewing, and swallowing; may choke or have a fear of choking
- resists/refuses/extremely fearful of going to the dentist or having dental work done
- may only eat hot or cold foods
- dislikes or complains about toothpaste and mouthwash
- prefers bland foods; avoids seasoned, spicy, sweet, sour or salty foods

2. Hyposensitivity To Oral Input (Under-Registers)

- may lick, taste, or chew on inedible objects; constantly putting objects in mouth (past the toddler years)
- prefers foods with intense flavor; i.e., excessively spicy, sweet, sour, or salty
- excessive drooling (past the teething stage)
- frequently chews on hair, shirt, or fingers
- loves vibrating toothbrushes and even trips to the dentist

Signs Of Olfactory Dysfunction (Smells):

1. Hypersensitivity To Smells (Over-Responsive):

- reacts negatively to/dislikes smells which do not usually bother/ get noticed, by other people
- tells other people (or talks about) how bad or funny they smell
- refuses to eat certain foods because of their smell
- offended and/or nauseated by bathroom odors or personal hygiene smells
- bothered/irritated by smell of perfume or cologne

2. Hyposensitivity To Smells (Under-Responsive):

- has difficulty discriminating unpleasant odors
- may drink or eat things that are poisonous because they do not notice the noxious smell
- makes excessive use of smelling when introduced to objects, people, or places

Signs Of Visual Input Dysfunction (No Diagnosed Visual Deficit):

1. Hypersensitivity To Visual Input (Over-Responsiveness)

- sensitive to bright lights; will squint, cover eyes, cry and/or get headaches from the light
- easily distracted by other visual stimuli in the room; i.e., movement, decorations, toys, windows, doorways etc.
- has difficulty in bright colorful rooms or a dimly lit room
- rubs his/her eyes, has watery eyes or gets headaches after reading or watching TV
- avoids eye contact
- enjoys playing in the dark

2. Hyposensitivity To Visual Input (Under-Responsive Or Difficulty With Tracking, Discrimination, Or Perception):

- has difficulty telling the difference between colors, shapes, or similar printed letters or figures (p & q, b & d)
- makes reversals in words/letters when copying, or reads words backwards; (i.e., "was" for "saw") after 1st grade
- has a hard time seeing the "big picture" (i.e., focuses on the details or patterns within the picture)
- has difficulty locating items among other items (clothes in a drawer, items on a grocery shelf, or toys in a bin)
- often loses place when reading or copying from a book or the chalkboard
- complains about "seeing double"
- difficulty with jigsaw puzzles, copying shapes, and/or cutting/tracing along a line
- tends to write at a slant (up or down hill) on a page
- fatigues easily with schoolwork

Auditory-Language Processing Dysfunction:

- difficulty identifying people's voices
- difficulty discriminating between sounds/words (i.e., "dare" and "dear")
- difficulty filtering out other sounds while trying to pay attention to one person talking
- bothered by loud, sudden, metallic, or high-pitched sounds
- difficulty attending to, understanding, and remembering what is said or read; often asks for directions to be repeated and may only be able to understand or follow two sequential directions at a time
- difficulty putting ideas into words (written or verbal)
- often talks out of turn or "off topic"
- if not understood, has difficulty re-phrasing; may get frustrated, angry, and give up

Signs Of Auditory Dysfunction: (no diagnosed hearing problem)

1. Hypersensitivity To Sounds (Auditory Defensiveness):

- distracted by sounds not normally noticed by others (humming of lights or refrigerators, clocks ticking)
- fearful of the sound of a flushing toilet (especially in public bathrooms), vacuum, hairdryer, or a dog barking
- bothered/distracted by background environmental sounds; i.e., lawn mowing or outside construction
- frequently asks people to be quiet; i.e., stop making noise, talking, or singing
- runs away, cries, and/or covers ears with loud or unexpected sounds
- may refuse to go to movie theaters, parades, skating rinks, musical concerts etc.

2. Hyposensitivity To Sounds (Under-Registers):

- often does not respond to verbal cues or to name being called
- appears to "make noise for noise's sake"
- loves excessively loud music or TV
- talks self through a task, often out loud

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Generally the guidelines for referral are:

- Please keep in mind developmental norms for ages 3-12;
- You are looking for several checks (over 50%) in one area;
- Multiple checks(more then less) in several areas:
 - Noting if the categories are either in the foundational 4(Tactile, Prop, Intero, Vest), or the functional 4(Oral, Visual, Auditory, Olfactory) or spread out in ALL;
- Heavy in the Sensory Seeking category;

Also, if there are sleep, eating & speech delays in conjunction with sensory sensitivities/challenges(even minimal) this is reason to be curious and send to Occupational Therapy for a Sensory Processing Evaluation.