

SENSORY SYSTEMS

1

Visual

Our eyes receive visual information, such as color, shape, size, orientation and movement, from the environment and relays this to our brains.



2

Auditory

Our ears detect sound and help us determine if the sounds are important or just part of everyday life, as well detect where the sound is coming from, how close it is and if we've heard it before



3

Tactile

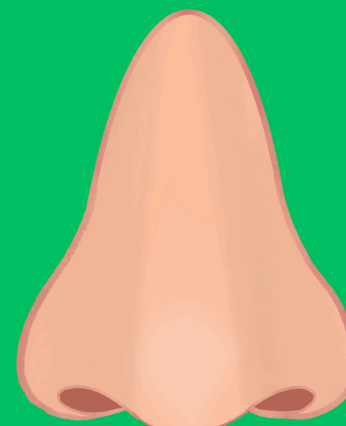
Sensors on skin help us detect pressure, textures, hot and cold, and pain. These sensors also help us determine if the pressure is firm or light and if something is wet or dry.



4

Olfactory

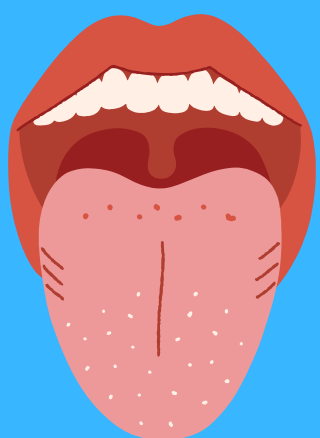
The sensory receptors in our nose pick up information about the smells around us and pass this along to our brain.



5

Gustatory

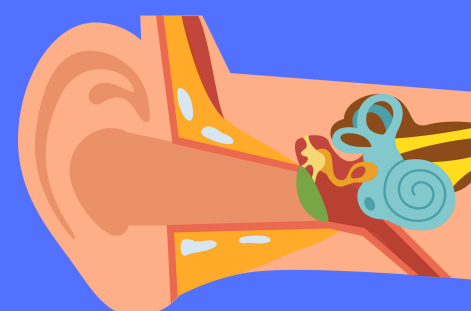
We have taste cells in our mouth, throat and on our tongue. They react to foods and drinks and tell us about flavor, textures and temperatures. They can detect 5 specific tastes : salty, sweet, bitter, sour and savory



6

Vestibular

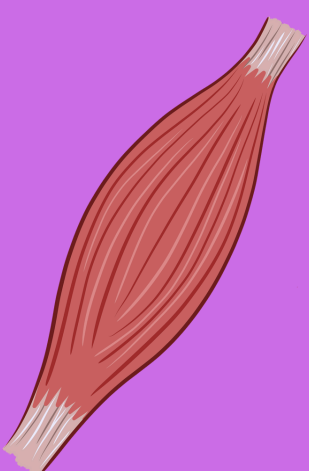
There are receptors in our ears that detect any change in position, direction or movement of our head. This contributes to our sense of body position, posture, coordination, balance, gravitational awareness and helps stabilize our visual field.



7

Proprioception

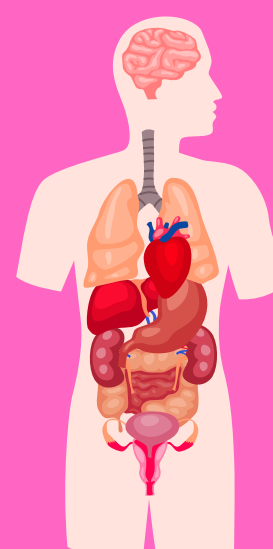
This system is throughout our body in our muscles and joints. It helps us detect and control force and pressure. It helps us feel grounded and know where we are and what we are doing with our bodies.



8

Interoception

Interoception is the ability to feel what is happening inside our body. This includes hunger, thirst, needing to use the bathroom body temperature, heart and breathing rate, muscle tension, itchiness, nausea and sleepiness.



VISUAL

SEEKER

- Seek out busy environments
- Prefer bright, shiny toys
- Distracted by objects that spin, flash or move
- Crave screen time
- Prefer stimulating movies and games

AVOIDER

- Seek out dark spaces
- Avoid messy/busy spaces
- Frequently cover their eyes
- React strongly to bright lights
- Be bothered by objects that are bright, shiny or spin
- Prefer muted tones and simple patterns

ACTIVITIES

- ISpy
- Marble Mazes
- Flashlight Tag
- Sensory bottles/lava lamps
- Spinning toys



AUDITORY

SEEKER

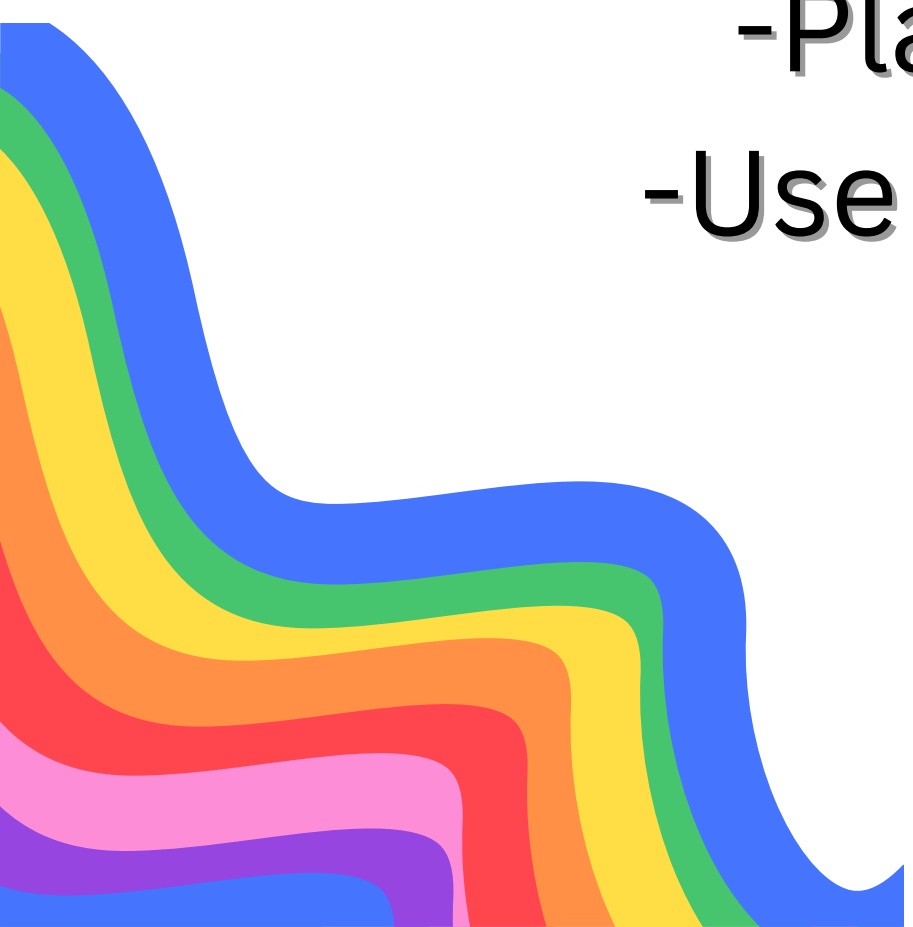
- Prefers working with background noise
- Listening to music/videos at high volumes
- Making repetitive sounds (eg: humming, tapping, clicking)

AVOIDER

- Covering ears
- Startled by unexpected sounds
- Discomfort in crowded places
- Prefers quiet environment
- Distracted by sounds in environment

ACTIVITIES

- Play with instruments
- Playing quiet music in background
- Use quiet muffs if sensitive to sounds
- Sing songs



TACTILE

SEEKER

- Frequently touch objects and people
- Enjoy various textures, including messy play
- Seeks out deep pressure

AVOIDER

- Dislike messy textures
- Difficulties with clothing
- Dislike touch from others

ACTIVITIES

- Sensory bins
 - Play doh
 - Slime
- Finger painting
- Water play



OLFACTORY

SEEKER

- Frequently smelling objects
- Preference of strong smells

AVOIDER

- Highly sensitive to smells
- Complaints of headache or nausea with strong smells
- Covering nose frequently

ACTIVITIES

- Use scented play doh or markers
- Scratch and sniff stickers/arts
- Gradually introduce new smells



GUSTATORY

SEEKER

- Prefer strong flavors
- Chewing gum & crunchy textures
- Chewing non-food items

AVOIDER

- Sensitive to flavors
- Picky eater
- Reluctant to try new flavors & textures

ACTIVITIES

- Chewy tubes
- Blowing bubbles
- Playing with food
- Sucking lollipops
- Vibrating toothbrush



VESTIBULAR SEEKER

- Spinning, swinging & jumping
- May appear restless
- Rocking in chair
- Constantly on the move

AVOIDER

- Discomfort with climbing, spinning & swinging
- Cautious with changes in body position
- Easily made dizzy/motion sick

ACTIVITIES

- Swinging
- Yoga
- Climbing
- Sitting on exercise ball
- Heavywork



PROPRIOCEPTION

SEEKER

- Seeks out physical pressure
 - Jumping & crashing
- Draping self over furniture
 - Stomping feet
 - Chewing objects

AVOIDER

- Avoids physical contact
- Discomfort with tight clothing
- Avoiding activities requiring significant body awareness
 - Fear of heights and movement

ACTIVITIES

- Crawling
- Carrying heavy objects
 - Blowing bubbles
 - Weighted items
 - Trampoline
- Rolling & pushing



INTEROCEPTION

SEEKER

- Less likely to acknowledge internal cues
(eg: not registering needing to use the bathroom)
- May enjoy the feeling of feeling hungry or thirsty
 - Enjoy feeling hot or cold
 - Have an increased breathing rate

HOW TO SUPPORT A SEEKER

- Set timers to remind child to eat & use bathroom
as they may be unaware
- Complete heavywork activities to
increase body awareness

AVOIDER

- Constantly feeling hungry, thirsty or like they need
to use the bathroom
- Disproportionate reactions to internal bodily cues
 - Feel pain more intensely or longer
 - More sensitive to temperature

HOW TO SUPPORT AN AVOIDER

- Acknowledge minor things may feel serious
to your child
- Encourage using the bathroom or having a snack
before a new activity
- Be prepared with items that may make
them comfortable (eg: keeping a jacket
available)

