

# Sensory Checklist

**Tactile Sense:** input from the skin receptors about touch, pressure, temperature, pain, and movement of the hairs on the skin.

## **Signs Of Tactile Dysfunction:**

### **1. Hypersensitivity To Touch (Tactile Defensiveness)**

\_\_\_ becomes fearful, anxious or aggressive with light or unexpected touch

\_\_\_ as an infant, did/does not like to be held or cuddled; may arch back, cry, and pull away

\_\_\_ distressed when diaper is being, or needs to be, changed

\_\_\_ appears fearful of, or avoids standing in close proximity to other people or peers (especially in lines)

\_\_\_ becomes frightened when touched from behind or by someone/something they can not see (such as under a blanket)

\_\_\_ complains about having hair brushed; may be very picky about using a particular brush

\_\_\_ bothered by rough bed sheets (i.e., if old and "bumpy")

\_\_\_ avoids group situations for fear of the unexpected touch

\_\_\_ resists friendly or affectionate touch from anyone besides parents or siblings (and sometimes them too!)

\_\_\_ dislikes kisses, will "wipe off" place where kissed

\_\_\_ prefers hugs

\_\_\_ a raindrop, water from the shower, or wind blowing on the skin may feel like torture and produce adverse and avoidance reactions

\_\_\_ may overreact to minor cuts, scrapes, and or bug bites

\_\_\_ avoids touching certain textures of material (blankets, rugs, stuffed animals)

\_\_\_ refuses to wear new or stiff clothes, clothes with rough textures, turtlenecks, jeans, hats, or belts, etc.

\_\_\_ avoids using hands for play

\_\_\_ avoids/dislikes/aversive to "messy play", i.e., sand, mud, water, glue, glitter, playdoh, slime, shaving cream/funny foam 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 by clothes rubbing on skin; may want to wear shorts and short sleeves year round, toddlers may prefer to be naked and pull diapers and clothes off constantly

\_\_\_ or, may want to wear long sleeve shirts and long pants year round to avoid having skin exposed

\_\_\_ distressed about having face washed

\_\_\_ distressed about having hair, toenails, or fingernails cut

\_\_\_ resists brushing teeth and is extremely fearful of the dentist

\_\_\_ is a picky eater, only eating certain tastes and textures; mixed textures tend to be avoided as well as hot or cold foods; resists trying new foods

\_\_\_ may refuse to walk barefoot on grass or sand

\_\_\_ may walk on toes only

## **2. Hyposensitivity To Touch (Under-Responsive):**

\_\_\_ may crave touch, needs to touch everything and everyone

\_\_\_ is not aware of being touched/bumped unless done with extreme force or intensity

\_\_\_ is not bothered by injuries, like cuts and bruises, and shows no distress with shots (may even say they love getting shots!)

\_\_\_ may not be aware that hands or face are dirty or feel his/her nose running

\_\_\_ may be self-abusive; pinching, biting, or banging his own head

\_\_\_ mouths objects excessively

\_\_\_ frequently hurts other children or pets while playing

\_\_\_ repeatedly touches surfaces or objects that are soothing (i.e., blanket)

\_\_\_ seeks out surfaces and textures that provide strong tactile feedback

\_\_\_ thoroughly enjoys and seeks out messy play

\_\_\_ craves vibrating or strong sensory input

\_\_\_ has a preference and craving for excessively spicy, sweet, sour, or salty foods

### **3. Poor Tactile Perception And Discrimination:**

\_\_\_ has difficulty with fine motor tasks such as buttoning, zipping, and fastening clothes

\_\_\_ 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 pants are twisted, shirt is half un tucked, shoes are untied, one pant leg is up and one is down, etc.

\_\_\_ has difficulty using scissors, crayons, or silverware

\_\_\_ continues to mouth objects to explore them even after age two

\_\_\_ has difficulty figuring out physical characteristics of objects; shape, size, texture, temperature, weight, etc.

\_\_\_ may not be able to identify objects by feel, uses vision to help; such as, reaching into backpack or desk to retrieve an item

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

**Signs Of Vestibular Dysfunction:**

**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, and may appear "wimpy"

\_\_\_ avoids/dislikes elevators and escalators; may prefer sitting while they are on them or, actually get motion sickness from them

\_\_\_ may physically cling to an adult they trust

\_\_\_ may appear terrified of falling even when there is no real risk of it

\_\_\_ afraid of heights, even the height of a curb or step

\_\_\_ fearful of feet leaving the ground

\_\_\_ fearful of going up or down stairs or walking on uneven surfaces

\_\_\_ 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

\_\_\_ as an infant, may never have liked baby swings or jumpers

\_\_\_ may be fearful of, and have difficulty riding a bike, jumping, hopping, or balancing on one foot (especially if eyes are closed)

\_\_\_ may have disliked being placed on stomach as an infant

\_\_\_ loses balance easily and may appear clumsy

\_\_\_ fearful of activities which require good balance

\_\_\_ avoids rapid or rotating movements

## **2. Hyposensitivity To Movement (Under-Responsive):**

\_\_\_ in constant motion, can't seem to sit still

\_\_\_ craves fast, spinning, and/or intense movement experiences

\_\_\_ loves being tossed in the air

\_\_\_ could spin for hours and never appear to be dizzy

\_\_\_ loves the fast, intense, and/or scary rides at amusement parks

\_\_\_ 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"; dangerous at times

\_\_\_ always running, jumping, hopping etc. instead of walking

\_\_\_ rocks body, shakes leg, or head while sitting

\_\_\_ likes sudden or quick movements, such as, going over a big bump in the car or on a bike

## **3. Poor Muscle Tone And/Or Coordination:**

\_\_\_ has a limp, "floppy" body

\_\_\_ 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!

- compensates for "looseness" by grasping objects tightly
- difficulty turning doorknobs, handles, opening and closing items
- difficulty catching him/her self if falling
- difficulty getting dressed and doing fasteners, zippers, and buttons
- may have never crawled as an baby
- 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", such as pencils, silverware, combs, scissors etc.
- 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
- has difficulty licking an ice cream cone
- seems to be unsure about how to move body during movement, for example, stepping over something
- difficulty learning exercise or dance steps

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

## **Signs Of Proprioceptive Dysfunction:**

### 1. Sensory Seeking Behaviors:

- seeks out jumping, bumping, and crashing activities
- stomps feet when walking
- 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
- loves to be tightly wrapped in many or weighted blankets, especially at bedtime

- prefers clothes (and belts, hoods, shoelaces) to be as tight as possible
- loves/seek out "squishing" activities
- enjoys bear hugs
- 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 (i.e., putting arms into sleeves or climbing)
- difficulty regulating pressure when writing/drawing; may be too light to see or so hard the tip of writing utensil breaks
- written work is messy and he/she often rips the paper when erasing
- always seems to be breaking objects and toys
- misjudges the weight of an object, such as a glass of juice, picking it up with too much force sending it flying or spilling, or with too little force and complaining about objects being too heavy
- may not understand the idea of "heavy" or "light"; would not be able to hold two objects and tell you which weighs more

\_\_\_ seems to do everything with too much force; i.e., walking, slamming doors, pressing things too hard, slamming objects down

\_\_\_ plays with animals with too much force, often hurting them

## **Signs Of Auditory Dysfunction: (no diagnosed hearing problem)**

### **1. Hypersensitivity To Sounds (Auditory Defensiveness):**

\_\_\_ distracted by sounds not normally noticed by others; i.e., humming of lights or refrigerators, fans, heaters, or clocks ticking

\_\_\_ fearful of the sound of a flushing toilet (especially in public bathrooms), vacuum, hairdryer, squeaky shoes, or a dog barking

\_\_\_ started with or distracted by loud or unexpected sounds

\_\_\_ 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.

\_\_\_ may decide whether they like certain people by the sound of their voice

### **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

\_\_\_ seems to have difficulty understanding or remembering what was said



- \_\_\_ appears oblivious to certain sounds
- \_\_\_ appears confused about where a sound is coming from
- \_\_\_ talks self through a task, often out loud
- \_\_\_ had little or no vocalizing or babbling as an infant
- \_\_\_ needs directions repeated often, or will say, "What?" frequently

## **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, resistive to trying new foods or restaurants, and may not eat at other people's houses)
- \_\_\_ may only eat "soft" or pureed foods past 24 months of age
- \_\_\_ may gag with textured foods
- \_\_\_ 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
- \_\_\_ refuses to lick envelopes, stamps, or stickers because of their taste
- \_\_\_ dislikes or complains about toothpaste and mouthwash
- \_\_\_ avoids seasoned, spicy, sweet, sour or salty foods; prefers bland foods

### **2. Hyposensitivity To Oral Input (Under-Registers)**

- \_\_\_ may lick, taste, or chew on inedible objects
- \_\_\_ 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

- constantly putting objects in mouth past the toddler years
- acts as if all foods taste the same
- can never get enough condiments or seasonings on his/her food
- loves vibrating toothbrushes and even trips to the dentist

## **Signs Of Olfactory Dysfunction (Smells):**

### **1. Hypersensitivity To Smells (Over-Responsive):**

- reacts negatively to, or dislikes smells which do not usually bother, or 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
- bothered by household or cooking smells
- may refuse to play at someone's house because of the way it smells
- decides whether he/she likes someone or some place by the way it smells

### **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
- unable to identify smells from scratch 'n sniff stickers
- does not notice odors that others usually complain about
- fails to notice or ignores unpleasant odors

\_\_\_ makes excessive use of smelling when introduced to objects, people, or places

\_\_\_ uses smell to interact with objects

## **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

\_\_\_ has difficulty keeping eyes focused on task/activity he/she is working on for an appropriate amount of time

\_\_\_ 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 similar printed letters or figures; i.e., p & q, b & d, + and x, or square and rectangle

\_\_\_ 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; i.e., papers on a desk, clothes in a drawer, items on a grocery shelf, or toys in a bin/toy box

- often loses place when copying from a book or the chalkboard
- difficulty controlling eye movement to track and follow moving objects
- has difficulty telling the difference between different colors, shapes, and sizes
- often loses his/her place while reading or doing math problems
- makes reversals in words or letters when copying, or reads words backwards; i.e., "was" for "saw" and "no" for "on" after first grade
- complains about "seeing double"
- difficulty finding differences in pictures, words, symbols, or objects
- difficulty with consistent spacing and size of letters during writing and/or lining up numbers in math problems
- 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
- confuses left and right
- fatigues easily with schoolwork
- difficulty judging spatial relationships in the environment; i.e., bumps into objects/people or missteps on curbs and stairs

## **Auditory-Language Processing Dysfunction:**

- unable to locate the source of a sound
- 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

- \_\_\_ looks at others to/for reassurance before answering
- \_\_\_ 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
- \_\_\_ difficulty reading, especially out loud (may also be dyslexic)
- \_\_\_ difficulty articulating and speaking clearly
- \_\_\_ ability to speak often improves after intense movement

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

### **Social:**

- \_\_\_ difficulty getting along with peers
- \_\_\_ prefers playing by self with objects or toys rather than with people
- \_\_\_ does not interact reciprocally with peers or adults; hard to have a "meaningful" two-way conversation
- \_\_\_ self-abusive or abusive to others
- \_\_\_ 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
- \_\_\_ often impulsive
- \_\_\_ functions best in small group or individually
- \_\_\_ variable and quickly changing moods; prone to outbursts and tantrums

\_\_\_ prefers to play on the outside, away from groups, or just be an observer

\_\_\_ avoids eye contact

\_\_\_ difficulty appropriately making needs known

## **Play:**

\_\_\_ difficulty with imitative play (over 10 months)

\_\_\_ wanders aimlessly without purposeful play or exploration (over 15 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:**

\_\_\_ excessive irritability, fussiness or colic as an infant

\_\_\_ can't calm or soothe self through pacifier, comfort object, or caregiver

\_\_\_ can't go from sleeping to awake without distress

\_\_\_ 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

\_\_\_ difficulty in extreme temperatures or going from one extreme to another (i.e., winter, summer, going from air conditioning to outside heat, a heated house to the cold outside)

\_\_\_ respiration that is too fast, too slow, or cannot switch from one to the other easily as the body demands an appropriate respiratory response

\_\_\_ heart rate that speeds up or slows down too fast or too slow based on the demands imposed on it

\_\_\_ 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, perhaps without visible cause)

\_\_\_ unpredictable state of arousal or inability to control arousal level (hyper to lethargic, quickly, vacillating between the two; over stimulated to under stimulated, within hours or days, depending on activity and setting, etc.)

\_\_\_ frequent constipation or diarrhea, or mixed during the same day or over a few days

\_\_\_ difficulty with potty training; does not seem to know when he/she has to go (i.e., cannot feel the necessary sensation that bowel or bladder are full)

\_\_\_ unable to regulate thirst; always thirsty, never thirsty, or oscillates back and forth

\_\_\_ unable to regulate hunger; eats all the time, won't eat at all, unable to feel full/hungry

\_\_\_ unable to regulate appetite; has little to no appetite and/or will be "starving" one minute then full two bites later, then back to hungry again (prone to eating disorders and/or failure to thrive)