

SENSORY DIET

WHAT IS A SENSORY DIET?

A sensory diet is a group of activities that are specifically scheduled into a child's day to assist with attention, arousal and adaptive responses. The activities are chosen for that child's needs based on sensory integration theory. The use of specific types of input; proprioceptive, tactile, visual auditory, vestibular, gustatory, and oral motor are introduced during various times of the day and assist the brain in regulating attention and an appropriate level of arousal. These different types of input cause a release of neuro-chemicals that can last up to two hours, depending on the type of input and intensity. A sensory diet is designed to keep a flow of these neuro-chemicals steady in the brain throughout the day for improved learning.

A sensory diet is prescribed only by an Occupational Therapist or a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant and is monitored by them, but it is a plan that should be carried out on a daily basis by a person trained on specific techniques by an OT or COTA. If you have any questions regarding this sensory diet, please talk to the child's therapist listed at the top of this page.

These activities are designed to produce a positive effect on a child. If at anytime the child reacts negatively to the input, the activity should be stopped. **NO ACTIVITY SHOULD EVER BE FORCED ON A CHILD.** Please only do the activities that have been checked off.

PROPRIOCEPTIVE / HEAVY MUSCLE WORK:

Carrying a weighted book bag or books to the office and back rolling a large ball on a child that is lying on the floor (can pretend to make a pizza and roll out the dough, etc. pushing the wall or chair push-ups pushing a vacuum, wheelbarrow, or large trash can down the hall playing on monkey bars, climbing activities rolling up in a blanket (regular or weighted) jumping on a trampoline jumping jacks, running in place with heavy stomping wheelbarrow walking tug of war games cleaning or erasing chalkboards pushing self on scooter (seated or on stomach) pushing self across floor on carpet square while seated or in kneeling deep pressure downward with hands on top of shoulders big bear hugs activities lying on stomach while propped up on elbows weighted vest or compression vest (20 minutes on 20 minutes off unless otherwise directed) weighted lap pad for sit down activities rearranging desks in room clapping games have child's palms on your palms and push, vice-versa stacking chairs pushing self in toy or tricycle drumming, banging on ball pushing on a ball rolling/pushing against a ball up a wall

ORAL MOTOR:

Chewy, crunchy foods to alert and increase attention (raw fruits and vegetables, licorice, gummy snacks, pretzel rods, gum, etc.) food with intense flavors (extreme sour) whistles, blowing activities, (blowing cotton balls across a paper, making bubbles with a straw in water, blowing bubbles) provide things to chew on (therapist will give you such as chew tubes, etc.) sucking (use water bottle at desk also increases hydration which increases concentration)

TACTILE (Touch):

Play in tubs of rice, beans, macaroni, etc. hands or feet, play in textured materials such as shaving cream, play-doh, cornstarch and water, etc. Can practice letters in these mediums brushing protocol if tactile defensive (requires one on one training with OT or COTA)

VESTIBULAR (Movement):

*Use caution with these activities, watch for changes in skin color, signs of nausea, and changes in heart rate or breathing. Stop immediately if these occur.

Swinging (no spinning) – child directed wind mills, head shoulders knees and toes songs (any songs that require change of head position jumping activities log rolling somersaults (if safe doing them, head tucked) - *Do not do with children with Downs Syndrome riding hippity hop scooter board (on stomach or seated) riding bike, etc.

ALERTING:

These activities are specifically designed to alert a child that is having a difficult time staying aroused. Please consult with OT or COTA before using these activities to make sure that the child is truly under aroused and not in a shut down state. Some signs of under stimulation are:

- Lethargic/falling asleep
- Slumped posture
- Decreased attention
- Slow moving
- Decreased ability to follow directions
- Drooling or open mouth posture

Gently wiping face and cool cloth use bright lighting drinking cold water from a water bottle or fountain loud, fast paced music irrhythmical swinging (need to be shown by OT) vigorously rubbing arms and back (not if tactile defensive) running in place jumping in place high knee stepping

Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.

Executive Functioning Skills guide everything we do. From making decisions, to staying on track with an activity, to planning and prioritizing a task. The ability to make a decision, plan it out, and act on it without being distracted is what allows us to accomplish the most mundane of tasks to the more complicated and multi-step actions. Children with executive functioning issues will suffer in a multitude of ways. Some kids have many deficits in EF and others fall behind in several or all areas. Everyone needs to develop and build executive functions as they grow. Functional adults may still be struggling with aspects of executive functioning skills. Executive dysfunction can interfere with independence and the ability to perform activities. The cognitive skills are an interconnected web of processing that allows for self-regulation, planning, organization, and memory.

HOME ACTIVITIES: Have students follow a written checklist of daily activities and or chores. Some of these activities can include, making bed, straightening their room, folding laundry, taking out the trash, being able to put a clean trash bag in trash can, drying dishes, setting table, wiping down tables and counter-tops, sweeping, vacuuming. Other tasks for the checklist can be monitoring TV/Electronic times, arise/sleep times; times for outside activities etc.

Sample Checklist:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7:am Wake up | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8: am Breakfast | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8:30 brush teeth | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9:00 Make bed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9:30 30 min electronics Make bed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10:00 sweep, vacuum | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10:30 straighten room | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11:00 outside/free time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12:00 Lunch | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1:00 select a chore

1:30 30 min TV/movie time

2:00 walk dog, dust, fold laundry

2:30 outside free time

3:00 homework

4:00 free time

5:00 dinner

8:00 brush teeth

8:30 bed time