



## NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM










### ACTIVITIES TO ASSIST IN THE REDUCTION OF TACTILE SENSITIVITY YOUNGER CHILD



The following is a list of activities/strategies aimed at reducing tactile sensitivity for the younger child.

Provide the child with opportunities to explore a wide range of graded tactile objects ranging from solid and dry to tacky or sticky. These objects should be introduced gradually and whenever possible as part of a game to motivate the child to play and explore the object. The following is a number of ideas that can be used:

- ✚ Hiding favourite toys in different substances i.e. rice/lentils, ball pools, playdough, therapy putty, shaving foam, jelly, beans, etc and cornflour gloop (made by mixing cornflour and water). This can be coloured by adding food colouring to reflect different environments i.e. blue for the sea, green for the swamp etc.). The games can consist of covering the toys or immersing them in one of the above substances and asking him to find them, rescue them etc. It is important to start with less threatening substances i.e. rice, lentils, packing foam and to gradually build up to other textures i.e. shaving foam, gloop etc.
- ✚ Making snowballs from shaving foam and newspaper. Immerse pieces of newspaper and in shaving foam, roll them into a ball and throw them at a target.
- ✚ Throwing sticky tactile soft toys at a wall and encouraging the child to pull them off before throwing them again.
- ✚ Hiding different textured balls in ball pools or the ordinary swimming pool and encourage the child to find them and post them.
- ✚ Providing a box of different textured fidget toys that the child can access throughout the day, ideas on what to include will be provided in the equipment list.
- ✚ Encourage the child to explore different tactile materials i.e. velvet, chiffon, fur etc. these can be purchased as remnants in different shops. The child can also be encouraged to walk on these and other tactile surfaces.
- ✚ Encourage the child to wash with textured soaps and to use different textured bath scrubbers. The use of textured soaps and scrubbers can assist in the reduction of tactile sensitivity.
- ✚ Provide the child with opportunities to engage in deep pressure activities, running, bouncing, climbing, trampolining, crawling, using playground equipment, horse riding, swimming etc. This will also assist in the development of Proprioceptive and Vestibular processing.
- ✚ Encourage the child to find different tactile items in a bowl of water, i.e. rainbow gloop and other sticky substances.

-  Encourage the child to finger paint and hand paint using different textured paints (i.e. making them thicker, adding cornflour etc. to make it tackier). He could also be encouraged (if tolerant) to apply paint to his feet and to walk across paper.
-  Encourage the child to use different textures to draw shapes or letters using his fingers i.e. sand, shaving cream, cornflour gloop, peanut butter, etc. This will also provide kinaesthetic feedback to assist in the development of letter formation.
-  Sand play is an excellent activity for reducing tactile sensitivity. Again encourage the child to draw different shapes and letters in the sand and to bury items and find them, wheel trucks and cars across the sand, etc.
-  Make a feely box by cutting a hole in the top of a shoe box and place different textured items inside. Encourage the child to insert his hand through the hole and to explore and identify different items before removing them from the box. Duplicate items or pictures of items can also be used with the child having to find a similar item in the box without looking.
-  Cooking is an excellent activity for the reduction of tactile sensitivity. Encourage the child to use his hands to mix up dough, pastry etc. Icing biscuits and cakes etc using sugar icing (if allowed) can be an excellent motivator to getting hands sticky.
-  It is important for Adults caring for and working with children with tactile sensitivity to be aware that different touch particularly light unexpected touch can often cause a negative reaction. The child should whenever possible be approached from the front so that he can see you coming.
-  Labels on clothing can often irritate the child with tactile sensitivity and it helps if these can be removed prior to wearing. They can also be irritated by seams on socks and it can help by turning them inside out.
-  Also new clothing can often appear scratchy to children with these difficulties and it often helps to wash them prior to wearing. Choosing softer textures clothes can also help.
-  Wearing a soft/familiar vest or other undergarment under clothes can help the child to tolerate new or unfamiliar/scratchy clothes. This can be tucked into the underpants to avoid labels or waistbands on trousers or skirts.

**NB It is important to remember at all times that children who experience tactile defensiveness do not process touch in the same way as we do and can often overreact or become distressed by what we would consider to be normal touch.**

**It is also very important to gradually introduce different textures, substances etc. and to remove them at once if the child is showing distress. Tolerance must be gradually built up and one must go with the pace of the child.**