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## NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM

### STRATEGIES TO ASSIST IN THE REDUCTION OF VISUAL SENSITIVITY



The following are a list of activities and strategies that can be used to assist the child in reducing visual sensitivity and to assist them in attending in different environments.

- ✚ It helps to be aware that the child can experience visual overload when introduced to environments that are bright or have fluctuating lights i.e. flashing lights, strobe lighting etc.
- ✚ It can help if you prepare the child for this experience by gradually introducing him/her to the environment and allowing them time to get used to the light. The more familiar and safe the child is in the environment the better they will be able to cope.
- ✚ Try using soft lights such as lamps or use dimmer switches to soften the light. Be aware that some children may struggle to tolerate LED light that can emit brighter light.
- ✚ Try to avoid bright coloured and busy patterned walls and try to keep the environment clutter free.
- ✚ Wearing sunglasses (if they will tolerate them), a sun visor or peaked cap can often help to cope with a particularly bright environment. To increase tolerance, it may help if you apply deep massage to the child's head and around the ears before he/she wears the glasses/cap.
- ✚ Avoid sitting the child near windows or directly under bright light
- ✚ Allow the child opportunities to escape from areas he/she finds too bright and distressing but gradually build up his/her tolerance by encouraging him to spend more and more time in the environment before removing him/her.
- ✚ Whenever possible provide the child with a safe dark space to get away from bright lights, this could be provided by using a large box with a blanket over the entrance, a pop tent, a quiet room with subdued lighting, a space in the classroom that is curtained off to shut out the bright lights, a space under the table.
- ✚ Allow the child opportunities to develop/design their own safe spaces or strategies to help them to cope with visual sensitivity.
- ✚ Be aware that the child with visual sensitivity can also be sensitive to sound and or touch and therefore find it difficult to cope in environments that are bright, loud and that have lots of people moving around, e.g. high schools, supermarkets, cinemas, theatres, swimming pools etc. They may attempt to exit these areas if unable to cope particularly if they become anxious or lose their sense of direction.

By Jean Pugh (Occupational Therapist)