

sensory diet

Parent Information

What is a sensory diet?

A sensory diet is a group of activities that are personalized and designed to fit in a child's daily schedule. The diet consists of sensory activities, equipment and strategies used to assist a child in feeling calm and staying alert throughout the day. A sensory diet is used when a child struggles to self-regulate their emotions.



Three main sensory systems:

Tactile: Sense and discrimination of touch.

Proprioception: Includes heavy work, where the body has input to the muscles and joints.

Vestibular: Sense of movement and balance. Head position is an important consideration during these activities.

Oral: May seek or avoid sensations within the mouth.

Signs of Under Stimulation:

- Falling asleep
- Slumped posture
- Decreased attention
- Slow moving
- Follow directions poorly
- Drooling or open mouth posture

Sensory Activity Ideas

Tactile:

- Rice bin
- Shaving cream
- Play-doh
- Water play
- Finger paint
- Vibrating toys

Proprioceptive:

- Carry a weighted backpack
- Weighted or compression vest
- Wheelbarrow walk
- Jump on a trampoline
- Wall push-ups
- Bear hugs

Vestibular:

- Swing
- Summersaults
- Head shoulders knees & toes
- Log rolling
- Bike riding
- Jump rope
- Rock

Oral:

- Oral chewy
- Crunchy foods
- Foods with intense flavors
- Blowing bubbles

Alerting Activities:

These activities are designed to alert a child that is having difficulty staying aroused and displaying signs of under stimulation.

Signs of Over Stimulation:

- Fidgeting
- Higher level of activity
- Easily distracted
- Increased muscle tone
- Shuts down
- Irritability/angry outbursts

Calming Activities:

These activities are designed to calm a child that is demonstrating increased activities and behaviors displaying signs of over stimulation.

Sensory Diet Template

Use this template to plan your child's sensory diet. You can use it to keep track of how your child responds to sensory activity based on their behavior. Choose activities based on your child's needs. If your child isn't responding positively to an activity, it's best to stop that activity. (There's also an example of a filled-out worksheet, to give you a better idea of how to use it).

Daily Activity	Behavior	Sensory Activity	Helpful?
Wake-up	Bad mood; Irritable	Calm voices	
Breakfast	Antsy; Fidgety	Weighted blanket on lap	
Lunch	Anxious	Bear hug	
Nap	Can't fall asleep	Rock in darken room	
Wake-up			
Breakfast			
Transition to school/daycare			
Lunch			
Nap/activity			
Snack			
Homework			
Free time/activity			
Dinner			
Bath/shower			
Bedtime			

Additional Resources

This page provides additional resources that can help parents learn more about their child's sensory needs and contribute to the formation of a sensory diet.

https://www.sensorysmarts.com/sensory_diet_activities.html

<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/sensory-processing/sensory-diet/>

<https://www.toolstogrowot.com/blog/2018/08/05/sensory-diet-practical-ways-to-incorporate-sensory-input>

Please consult with your occupational therapist before purchasing any sensory related equipment.
<https://www.sensorykidstore.com/>

Additional sensory activities categorized into sensory systems.
<https://www.sensorysmarts.com/sensory-diet.pdf>
