

## Resources

**STAR Institute for Sensory Processing Disorder** – More information related to SPD, treatment, and research

<https://www.spdstar.org>

**Building Resilience in a Child with SPD**

[https://www.spdstar.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Building%20Resilience%20Tip%20Sheet\\_0.pdf](https://www.spdstar.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Building%20Resilience%20Tip%20Sheet_0.pdf)

**Home Activities and General Guidelines**

<https://www.spdstar.org/basic/home-activities>

**Profectum Foundation** – Free webcasts about relating to children with sensory and communication-related disorders

<https://www.profectum.org>

**Sensational Kids: Hope and Help for Children with Sensory Processing Disorder** by Lucy Jane Miller, Ph.D., OTR (2014)

## References

Ahn, R. R., Miller, L. J., Milberger, S., & McIntosh, D. N. (2004). Prevalence of parents' perceptions of sensory processing disorders among kindergarten children. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 58(3), 287-93.

Ben-Sasson, A., Hen, L., Fluss, R., Cermak, S. A., Engel-Yeger, B., & Gal, E. (2009). A meta-analysis of sensory modulation symptoms in individuals with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 39(1), 1-11.

The Psychological Corporation. (2003). Understanding sensory processing: An update.

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# Sensory Processing Disorder



**Information to help you learn about your child's sensory processing patterns and behaviors**

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## Key to Remember & How to Help

### Key to Remember

Sensory processing is a neurological disorder, meaning the behaviors a child with SPD displays are primarily to bring order to and ground his or her nervous system. The foundational sensory system which develops first in utero is the somatosensory system upon which other senses are built. A child must be aware of where his or her body is in space and what his or body is doing for other senses to operate well and for higher-brain functions such as learning and reasoning to take place.

### How to Help

- \* Carefully observe your child's emotional reactions and respect them.
- \* Be in tune with your child's sensory preferences – does he or she seek or avoid certain types of input?
- \* If your child seeks intense sensory input such as jumping, crashing, and falling, incorporate these into safe activities such as bowling, monkey bars, trampolines, and pulling a heavy wagon.
- \* If your child is sensitive to certain sensations, activities that provide deep pressure to skin, resistance to muscles, and input to joints are calming.
- \* More suggestions can be found at the Home Activities link under Resources on the last page of this booklet.

# 10 Fundamental Facts

When extended family, teachers, neighbors, other parents, and service providers ask you what Sensory Processing Disorder is, the following are research-supported statements you can make.

- 1) Sensory Processing Disorder is a complex disorder of the brain that affects developing children and adults.
- 2) Parent surveys, clinical assessments, and laboratory protocols exist to identify children with SPD.
- 3) At least one in twenty people in the general population may be affected by SPD.
- 4) In children who are gifted and those with ADHD, Autism, and fragile X syndrome, the prevalence of SPD is much higher than in the general population.
- 5) Studies have found a significant difference between the physiology of children with SPD and children who are typically developing.
- 6) Studies have found a significant difference between the physiology of children with SPD and children who have ADHD.
- 7) Sensory Processing Disorder has unique sensory symptoms that are not explained by other known disorders.
- 8) Heredity may be one cause of the disorder.
- 9) Laboratory studies suggest that the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are not typically functioning in children with SPD.
- 10) Preliminary research data support decades of anecdotal evidence that occupational therapy is an effective intervention for treating the symptoms of SPD.

(Star Institute for SPD)  
(Miller, 2014)

# About SPD

## Definition of SPD

- We take in information through 8 senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, vestibular (sense of head movement in space), proprioception (sensations from muscles and joints), and interoception (sensations from internal organs)
- SPD is a disorder of the process by which we receive information through our senses, organize this information, and use it to participate in everyday activities

## What does SPD feel like?

- A traffic jam of information in the brain
- May feel bombarded by information; may crave intense sensory experiences, or they may be unaware of sensations that others feel (Star Institute for SPD)
- May also have sensorimotor symptoms such as a weak body, clumsiness, or delayed motor skills (Star Institute for SPD)

## How common is it?

- SPD affects 1 in 20 children (Ben-Sasson et al., 2009) and may be more common than that (Ahn et al., 2004)

(Star Institute for SPD)

# Types of Atypical Sensory Responsiveness

On Winnie Dunn's standardized assessment named the Sensory Profile, there are four continuums of sensory responsiveness. They refer to being more than others, the same as others, or less than others in the following areas: sensory-sensitive, sensory-avoiding, sensory-seeking, and low registration (The Psychological Corporation, 2003). An individual may be sensitive to some types of sensory input and less to others. Other individuals may avoid certain types of input but seek other types of input.

**If a child scores “more than others” in one or more of these areas, it means that he or she:**

**Sensory-sensitive** | notices more sensory events than others

“I complain about tags in my clothing”

**Sensory-avoiding** | actively avoids sensory input that is distressing

“I cry and shield my eyes from the sun and other bright lights”

**Sensory-seeking** | enjoys and seeks out high levels of stimulation

“I am always smelling people, food, and objects”

**Low registration** | does not pick up environmental cues; seems disconnected

“I seem unaware of normal touch or pain – I often touch others too soft or too hard”

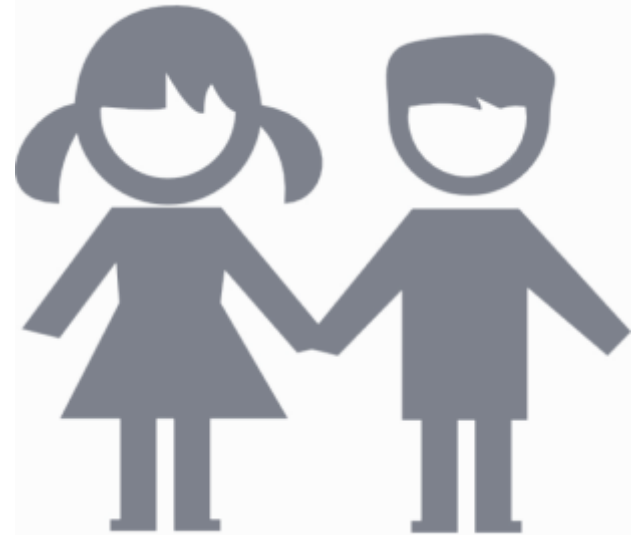
# Common Symptoms

**Symptoms commonly seen in school-age children**

Over-sensitive to touch, noise, smells, other people

Easily distracted, fidgety, craves movement; aggressive

Easily overwhelmed



Difficulty with handwriting and fine motor activities

Difficulty making friends

Unaware of pain and/or other people