

Tactile Sensitivity

The tactile system provides us with our sense of touch. It protects us from danger and helps us identify different objects in the environment. Some people are oversensitive to touch and may:

- Avoid or overreact to ordinary touch experiences (touching play dough, being touched by someone, going barefoot).
- Avoid daily activities (washing face/hands, brushing hair, or shows strong clothing preferences).
- Avoid light touch (like a kiss) but seek out deep touch (like a bear hug).

Gradual participation in tactile activities, such as those listed below, can help the sensory system process tactile information.

Strategies for positive tactile play experiences:

- Provide proprioceptive input daily, and before beginning a tactile activity to calm and prepare the child. Please see attached "Heavy Work Activities".
- Provide firm, consistent touch – light and/or intermittent touch where you remove your hands from the child and replace them often can be aggravating to some
- Move slowly and let your child anticipate what you will do – do not try to "sneak up" on them with texture
- Go at the child's pace and respect the child when he/she is "all done" with the activity. A child may be more willing to accept touch experiences when he/she is in control.
- Make it fun and be playful! Use silly voices, songs or movements to minimize anxiety and discomfort.
- If a child will not participate with bare hands, try allowing them to wear gloves, use a paintbrush, qtip, cotton ball, etc. to participate and work down to bare hands.

Tactile Activity Ideas:

- Fill a tub with dry rice, beans, corn, sand, shredded paper, water beads, water with bubbles, etc. and let children sift, scoop, find small hidden items, and play.
- Use shaving cream, pudding, finger paint, etc. on the shower wall, table, mirror, etc. to write and draw.
- Playdoh, silly putty, clay, gak, flarp, oobleck, moon dough, cloud dough, flubber, etc. Look online for tons of recipes for homemade options and ideas!
- Allow the child to help cook a recipe that includes using the hands to mix, roll, knead, pat, etc.
- Texture boxes, books, bags, boards or games (can be homemade) that have the child use touch instead of sight to explore, or match by feel for different textures using squares cut from materials such as sandpaper, silky tie or pjs, terry cloth towel, etc.