



# SENSORY PROCESSING

Sensory processing is how our brains receive and respond to the information our senses pick up from the environment. Autistic children may experience differences in the way that they process sensory information. This may impact their participation in daily activities and interactions.

Some autistic children may be hypersensitive, meaning they react strongly to sensory input that others might not even notice, like the hum of fluorescent lights or the feel of certain fabrics. This heightened sensitivity can lead to discomfort or anxiety in everyday situations.

Some autistic children may be hyposensitive, meaning they need more intense sensory input to engage or react. They might seek out strong sensations, like spinning in circles or making loud noises, to fulfil their sensory needs.

These sensory differences can impact a child's behaviour, communication, and daily functioning, making it important to understand and support their unique sensory needs. By recognising these sensory processing challenges, we can create environments and strategies that help autistic children feel more comfortable and engaged.





# SO WHAT ARE THESE SENSES?

## **SIGHT (VISUAL)**

The visual system helps us make sense of the world by processing what we see. Some children may be overly sensitive to bright lights or busy environments, while others might seek out more visual input, like staring at objects or watching moving lights.

## **HEARING (AUDITORY)**

The auditory system processes sound, helping us understand speech, enjoy music, and stay alert to our surroundings. Children who are sensitive to sound may find noisy environments overwhelming, while those who seek more input might enjoy loud music or make repetitive sounds.

## **TOUCH (TACTILE)**

The tactile system allows us to feel textures, pressure, and temperature. Some kids might be sensitive to certain fabrics or resist messy play, while others might crave touch, seeking out hugs or enjoying rough-and-tumble play.

## **TASTE (GUSTATORY)**

The gustatory system processes taste, contributing to our enjoyment of food. Some children may be picky eaters, sensitive to certain textures or flavors, while others might seek out intense tastes, like spicy or sour foods.

## **SMELL (OLFACTORY)**

The olfactory system helps us detect and differentiate smells. A child with a sensitive olfactory system might be overwhelmed by strong odours, while another might frequently sniff objects or enjoy strong scents.

## **BALANCE (VESTIBULAR)**

The vestibular system gives us information about balance and movement. Some children might avoid activities that involve too much movement, like spinning or swinging, while others might seek out that kind of input, frequently moving or fidgeting.

## **BODY AWARENESS (PROPRIOCEPTION)**

The proprioceptive system helps us know where our bodies are in space. Children who receive less information from their proprioception system may appear heavy handed or bump into things, while those seeking more input might seek out activities that involve heavy work, like pushing or pulling, climbing or crashing.

## **INTERNAL BODY AWARENESS (INTEROCEPTION)**

Interoception is our ability to sense internal body signals, like hunger, thirst, or the need to use the bathroom. Some children may have difficulty recognising these signals, leading to challenges in self-regulation, while others may be overly aware, feeling discomfort from minor bodily sensations.