

Sensory Diet Information and Strategies

A sensory diet is a group of activities that are specifically scheduled into a child's day to assist with attention, arousal, and adaptive responses. The different types of input: proprioceptive, tactile, visual, auditory, vestibular, and oral motor, are used throughout the day to assist the brain in regulating attention and arousal level.

Just so you know:

- A child's sensory may change over time and strategies that worked before may no longer be effective
- Sensory diets can be a lot of trial and error so don't get frustrated or give up if it takes time to find what works!

Heavy Work (Proprioceptive):

- Carrying a book or something weighted
- Rolling a large ball on a child that is lying on the floor (pretend to make a pizza and roll out the dough)
- Wall or chair push-ups
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Rolling up in a blanket (regular or weighted)
- Jumping on the trampoline
- Jumping jacks
- Stomping or running in place
- Erasing dry erase board
- Scooter board while seated or on stomach
- Deep pressure to the shoulders (push downward)
- Bear hugs, body squeezes
- Swinging on stomach using hands to propel around
- Tasks where child in on their stomach and propped up on elbows
- Weighted vest, compression vest (20 minutes on then 20 minutes off)
- Weighted lap pad
- Clapping games
- Palm to palm to do hand pushes
- Drumming toys
- Pushing a ball (regular or weighted)
- Crawling through tunnel

Oral Motor:

- Chewy, crunchy foods to alert and increase attention (pretzels, raw vegetables, gummy snacks, gum)
- Flavorful food (extreme sour)
- Whistles, blowing activities (blowing cotton balls across paper, making bubbles with a straw in water, blowing bubbles)
- Provide appropriate things to chew on (chewy tubes)
- Sucking (water bottle with straw, juice with straw, thicker consistency-yogurt with straw)

- Vibrating pen/vibrating toothbrush

Touch (Touch):

- Play in tubes of rice, beans, macaroni (can use hands or feet)
- Textured play (play doh, shaving cream, slime, water beads)
- Brushing protocol if tactile defensive (resists touch), ask Sarah to show you how to do it!

Movement (Vestibular):

Please be careful when completing these activities and look for signs of nausea, dizziness, or changes in breathing

-Swinging

- Wind mills, head shoulders knees and toes songs (any songs that require change of head position)

- Jumping activities

- Log rolling

- Scooter board

- Wiggle cushion

Auditory:

- Calming music, usually nature sounds
- Preferred music for set period of time (3-5 minutes)
- Quiet environment, limit external noise, use headphones if child will tolerate

Visual:

Low response:

- Bright colors and toys that light up
- High contrast between picture and paper or paper and words

High response:

- Limit visual field, meaning objects around the room, posters, papers, colorful toys
- Solid colors, not prints or patterns
- Neutral or soft colors
- Limit brightness and color overload with clothing

Sample Sensory Diet

Here is a sample sensory diet, created for a second grade child with sensory processing disorder. We've used the annoying term "as directed" to avoid providing a cookbook recipe. Activities must be individualized for each child and modified frequently to meet changing needs. A separate program was worked out for this child with the school, including frequent movement breaks, an inflatable seat cushion for wiggling while remaining seated, and providing crunchy/chewy oral comfort snacks at handwriting time.

In the Morning

- Massage feet and back to help wake up
- Listen to recommended therapeutic listening CD
- Use vibrating toothbrush and/or vibrating hairbrush
- Eat crunchy cereal with fruit and some protein
- Spin on Dizzy Disc Jr. as directed by your OT or PT
- Jump on mini-trampoline as directed

After school

- Go to playground for at least 30 minutes
- Push grocery cart or stroller
- Spinning as directed
- Mini-trampoline. Add variety: have him play catch or toss toys into a basket while jumping.
- Massage feet to "reorganize," use therapy putty, make "body sandwiches," wheelbarrow walk
- Do ball exercises as directed
- Listen to therapeutic listening CD
- Oral work — suck thick liquids through a straw, eat crunchy and chewy snacks, or chew gum before and/or during tabletop activities

At dinnertime

- Help with cooking, mixing, chopping, etc.
- Help set table, using two hands to carry and balance a tray
- Provide crunchy and chewy foods

At night

- Family time: clay projects, painting projects, etc.
- Warm bath with bubbles and calming essential oil
- Massage during reading time

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