

Sensory Symptoms Checklist

The following checklist is not a diagnostic tool. Rather, it is an indicator of sensory over- or under-responsiveness. The purpose of this tool is to assist in developing an appropriate treatment plan, and/or sensory diet, for an individual with sensory modulation difficulties.

Remember that it is normal for all people to be sensitive to certain sensations. Sensory modulation becomes a disorder only when it is negatively impacting a person's life (i.e. ability to pay attention, learn, socialize, relax).

* Indicates Sensory-Seeking behavior. Sensory-Seeking is a form of under-responsiveness but these individuals seek intense sensation to make up for the under-responsiveness of their nervous systems. The general under-responders tend to be more passive and sedentary than the sensory-seekers, but still share many symptoms.

TACTILE (TOUCH)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:

- avoids affectionate touch
- bothered by seams in clothing, tags, waistbands, etc.
- avoids messy play including finger-painting and play-doh
- dislikes nail-trimming/hair-cutting hair-brushing/tooth-brushing
- limited food preferences, sensitive to food textures
- excessively ticklish
- avoids standing close to others
- startles easily when touched unexpectedly
- overreacts to minor injuries or mosquito bites

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- always touching others*
- as a young child, may prefer to be without clothes and barefoot
- doesn't seem to notice messy hands or face
- touches everything, brings objects and toys to mouth frequently*
- may stuff too much food in mouth
- seems unaware of light touch
- doesn't seem to notice cuts and scrapes, doesn't mind shots
- drools, doesn't wipe runny nose
- unintentionally rough on pets or other kids
- craves intense flavors – salty, sweet, sour, spicy*
- difficulty with fine motor tasks

PROPRIOCEPTIVE (PRESSURE ON MUSCLES AND JOINTS)

Since proprioceptive input is always helpful to the nervous system, we do not see **over-responsivity** in this category.

- Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:
- _____ loves jumping, climbing, wrestling, and crashing activities*
 - _____ walks on toes*, or walks heavily
 - _____ difficulty with fine motor tasks
 - _____ prefers crunchy and chewy foods*

 - _____ sucks thumb or fingers, chews on clothes and toys
 - _____ grinds teeth, cracks knuckles*
 - _____ loves tight hugs and “squishing” activities or positions*
 - _____ chooses thick or heavy blankets
 - _____ self-abusive behaviors – pinching, biting, head-banging*
 - _____ prefers tight-fitting clothes or may wear a snug jacket constantly*

Other symptoms of proprioceptive dysfunction that are not classified as either over- or under-responsiveness include (circle all that apply): accidentally breaks objects frequently, presses too hard or too light when coloring or writing, uses inappropriate force on objects (i.e. may squeeze juice boxes too tightly), uses too much force for things like opening/closing doors, plays roughly with animals and other kids.

VESTIBULAR (MOVEMENT)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:

- _____ as a baby, dislikes being held away from adult’s body or tossed in air, may be “clingy”
- _____ avoids swings, slides, anything that requires feet to be off the ground
- _____ fearful of escalators, elevators, and all heights
- _____ gets motion sick easily
- _____ dislikes leaning back for hair-washing or floating on back in pool

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- _____ as a baby, needs to be rocked a lot, is happiest in stroller, swing, bouncer*
- _____ dislikes sedentary tasks*
- _____ is in constant motion, loves spinning, swinging, being upside down*
- _____ may have low muscle tone (muscles and joints seem too soft and floppy)
- _____ “W” sitting on floor, slumps, leans in chair
- _____ loves spinning, loves amusement park rides, is a “thrill-seeker”*
- _____ rocks self or moves head back and forth while sitting*

AUDITORY (SOUND)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:

- _____ as a baby, startles easily, cries with vacuum, hair-dryers, toilet flushing
- _____ dislikes noisy places
- _____ easily distracted and bothered by background noises
- _____ cries, covers ears with loud or unexpected sounds
- _____ asks others to be quiet

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- _____ may not consistently respond to name (rule out hearing loss)
- _____ prefers t.v. and music to be loud*
- _____ often doesn't notice background noises
- _____ makes own sounds frequently, enjoys silly sounds of others*
- _____ says "What?" frequently even though hearing is intact
- _____ may appear oblivious to some sounds, has difficulty locating sound
- _____ may use self-talk to get through a task

VISUAL

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:

- _____ bothered by bright lights, sun
- _____ dislikes visually busy places (stores, playgrounds, cluttered rooms)
- _____ avoids eye contact
- _____ prefers dim lighting, shade
- _____ rubs eyes a lot, may get headaches from reading

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- _____ loves shiny, spinning or moving objects*
- _____ difficulty with eye-hand coordination tasks (catching a ball, stringing (beads, tracing and writing)
- _____ loves action-packed, colorful t.v. shows and electronic games*
- _____ difficulty distinguishing between similar letters and shapes
- _____ difficulty with visual-tracking, may lose place frequently while reading

GUSTATORY AND OLFACTORY (TASTE AND SMELL)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:

- _____ talks about smell a lot, notices odors others don't notice
- _____ plugs nose, avoids places with strong smells (some restaurants)
- _____ dislikes new foods, may have very limited food preferences

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- _____ smells and licks inedible objects such as toys and play-doh*
- _____ likes strong odors such as perfume, cleaning products, and gasoline*
- _____ prefers strongly flavored foods - spicy, salty, bitter, sour, sweet*

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. See note at top of form.