

Touch - Sensory

What is it?: Some children can be oversensitive to touch. They may disengage in messy play type activities, say that someone has hit them (when they have only been touched lightly) and can find standing in line difficult due to the likelihood of being touched. On the other hand, some children can crave touch input and constantly seek tactile experiences. They may be observed as being 'rough' or forceful with other children, even though this is not intended, constantly touching objects.

How You Can Help:

Oversensitive to touch:

- Always try to warn a child before touching them
- Always provide firm touch with a large body surface contact (bear hug)
- Reduce the number of textures against skin
- Provide calming activities e.g.
 - heavy pushing and pulling games e.g. tug of war
 - firm massage to the arms and hands
 - pushing / squeezing hands together
 - strong hugs (given by self or others)
- Never force a child to touch something they don't want to – break it down in stages and slowly introduce them to it, always give lots of praise when they attempt to touch / move forwards
 - Talk about textures prior to asking the child to touch them
 - Allow the child to place their hands on top of your arms/hands whilst you play with the texture – without them being exposed to the texture
 - Then ask the child to have their hands on top of your hands with some exposure to the texture
 - Then put your hands on top of the child's hands to give them increased exposure
 - Slowly reduce the need for hand over hand support.
 - The use of timers can be helpful to give a clear start and stop / expectation so the child knows how long they need to play with the object – start with a small amount of time and slowly increase once the child has increased tolerance
- Please also see additional sensory strategy information on our website where touch has an impact on self-care skills such as hair washing, cutting and dressing



Seeking Touch:

- It is important to provide lots of exposure to touch at appropriate times in the day to help reduce the child seeking touch at less appropriate times.
- Provide lots of heavy work / touch activities throughout the day e.g.
 - heavy pushing and pulling games,
 - firm massage to the arms and hands,
 - pushing / squeezing hands together, strong hugs (given by self or others),
 - vibrating toys
- Provide the child with a fiddle toy whilst expecting them to sit and concentrate e.g. carpet time, assemblies

