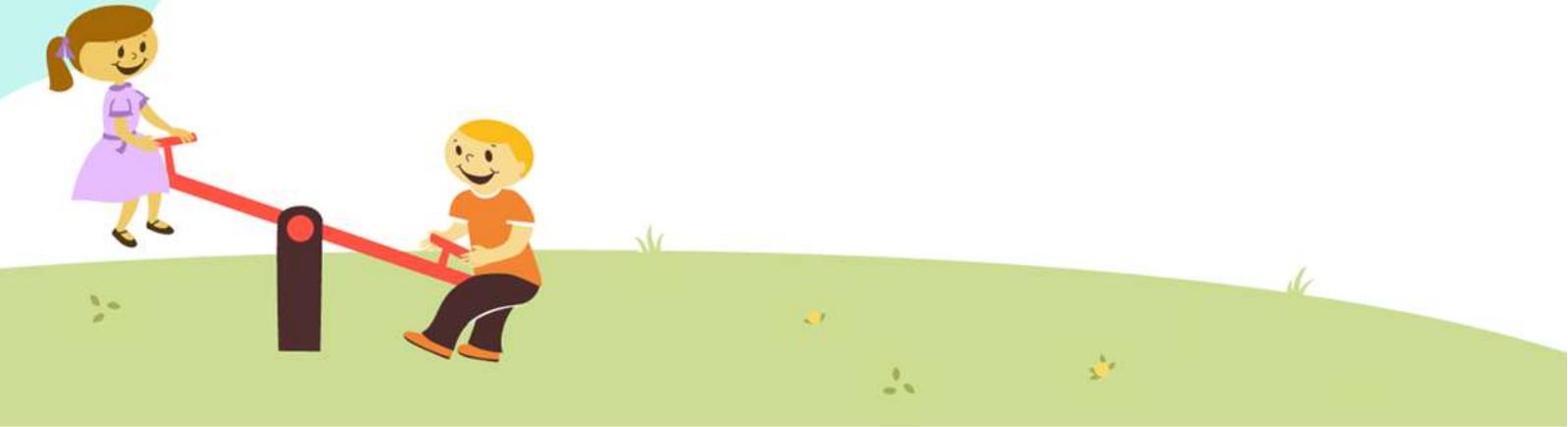


Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Movement and Balance

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



This series of Sensory Questionnaires are designed to enable you to check your child's progress at particular stages of development.

YOUR SENSE OF MOVEMENT AND BALANCE

Your sense of movement and balance is known as your VESTIBULAR sense. The nerves that control your vestibular system are located in your inner ear and tell your brain what direction you are moving in, whether your head is up, down, or turned to the side, and helps your body stay upright against gravity.

Some children can be very sensitive to movement because for them a little bit of movement feels very big and scary. Other children don't register movement as well as others and so they tend to seek out movement all the time! If you think your child moves too much or too little complete this questionnaire and use the strategies to help them develop their sense of movement.

Contents

Question 1	.....	1
Question 2	.....	2
Question 3	.....	2
Question 4	.....	4
Question 5	.....	5
Question 6	.....	6
Question 7	.....	7



Question 1 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 1

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child become anxious when their feet leave the ground? Do they avoid playing on swings, or going on the roundabout etc.?

Most young children love being spun round, pushed on the swings and being engaged in rough and tumble play. If however your child is sensitive to movement, taking part in activities that may seem fun to others can be very frightening for them.



Strategies and Suggestions

It is important to let your child experience movement in a fun and controlled way so that they can learn to 'cope' with the sensation. Try the following suggestions:

- Always prepare your child in advance; tell them what is going to happen and reassure them you are right there and won't let them go.
- Break down the task into achievable steps for example you sit on a swing with your child on your knee, keep your feet firmly on the ground and move back and forth a tiny bit. As your child settles and starts to feel more confident gradually increase the amount of movement you make. Eventually you can move your child onto a bucket seat type swing, (which provides more support and security than a normal swing seat) and gently move them back and forward.
- Don't make fun of your child; their fear is genuine and they need your support to face it in a controlled and secure way.
- Teach your child to use their feet to activate equipment and be in control e.g. sitting on and pushing along a scooter or trike, swinging self on a swing where their feet can touch the ground.
- Sometimes holding something can help a child control their fear and anxiety, so allow your child to hold onto their favourite toy during these activities.





Question 3 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 2

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child dislike activities where their head is upside down e.g. somersaults or rough and tumble play?

Does your child become distressed when an enthusiastic relative picks them up and tips them over? Do they appear upset when their feet are not on the floor? These are often signs of a sensitive movement system where your brain interprets, what seem to the rest of us as small changes in position, as something big and unpleasant (for those of you who have experienced an inner ear infection you will understand exactly how your child feels).



Strategies and Suggestions

- Explain to your relatives that your child is sensitive to movement and ask them to be gentle. Do not let them call your child a 'woose' or a coward; their anxiety is real and needs to be supported.
- Keep encouraging your child to try different movement experiences in a gradual, gentle and non-threatening way. If they need extra support i.e. a hand to hold or an arm to lean against that is fine.
- Try making a game of movement to allow your child to experience it in a fun way, for example have your child sit on a chair facing you (ideally a chair with arms that they can hold onto) and get them to copy your movements. Look up, look down, look from side to side etc. Once they can do this try it again in different places and positions e.g. play 'I Spy' whilst walking along the street, point out things that involve them looking up at signs, or planes in the sky, and looking down at bugs on the ground. Gradually increase the activities once your child begins to become more confident with the movement.
- Often children manage their fear or anxiety by holding onto something they can squeeze. If they don't have a favourite toy they like to take everywhere provide a squeazy fidget toy that they can keep in their pocket for when they need that extra support.



- Allow your child to go at their own pace; never force them to participate in this type of activity.





Question 3 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 3

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child not seem to get dizzy when others usually would?

Some children's sense of movement is under-responsive, so these children can continue seeking movement experiences way beyond the point when the rest of us would have started to feel sick. When children are young they may look for lots of movement experiences to help their vestibular system mature, but as they grow older they no longer require to move about quite so much and so can settle down and concentrate on other things.



This is a normal stage of development for pre-schoolers, however if you think your child is even more active than most young children e.g. is always on the go, tends to spin round in circles or spends hours on the swing then answer 'yes' to this question.

Strategies and Suggestions

Provide your child with plenty opportunities to engage in active play. Not only will this be beneficial for developing their sense of movement but will also help support growth and bone development and the acquisition of motor skills. Visit the park and let them run around and play on the playground equipment. Going to soft-play and bouncing on a trampoline are also excellent ways to experience movement.





Question 4 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 4

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child resist having their head tipped back when in the bath or having their nappy changed?

This is similar to question 1 and 2 in as much as if a child is sensitive to movement then trying to carry out daily life activities can be a struggle. Imagine trying to lean back to have your hair rinsed or bending over to pull on your welly boots if you had an inner ear infection? It wouldn't be a pleasant experience! Some children can feel a similar degree of discomfort with head movement. If your child becomes anxious or distressed when their head is tipped back answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Children who are uncomfortable with changing the position of their head may not lie down to rinse their hair in the bath. Try a hand held shower or cover your child's eyes with a facecloth and use a jug of water to rinse their hair.
- Try using a face guard or shampoo shield which can be purchased online or in your local chemist, and will enable you to have both hands free to get their hair washed as quickly as possible. There are a range of protectors to choose from so have a look online and see what type would best suit your needs.
- Nappy changes may be difficult if your child is uncomfortable with movement; try propping them up with a pillow so that they are not having to lie down flat. If your child is able why not try pull-up style nappy pants which can be managed easier whilst your child is standing up.
- Use visual aids and picture stories to increase your child's understanding of what is about to happen; show them pictures of nappy changing and if necessary use an egg timer to show them how quickly the task will be over. Make sure you have everything to hand so that you can get the job done as quickly as possible.
- The old distraction technique is always worth a try; use motivating toys, or blow 'raspberries' on your child's tummy to distract their attention whilst you get on with the task at hand.



KIDS
Scotland



Question 6 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 5

[Back to Top](#)

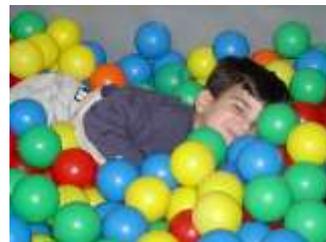
Does your child seek out all kinds of movement, and is always on the go?

Is your child one of those children who needs to keep moving? Some children who need lots of movement can appear to be fidgeting even when they should be sitting still (remember that old expression 'ants in their pants'). Some children though can concentrate as long as they are able to fidget at the same time.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Watch your child to see if there is any pattern to their movement. Do they rock or fidget even when watching the TV or eating their meals? Is the movement more obvious when they don't like the task e.g. they don't want to sit and eat because they really want to get back to playing?
- Make sure your child has lots of opportunities to 'burn off' their energy throughout the day. Visit the swing park, walk through the woods, or go to your local soft play centre.



- Don't let the weather stop you from going out and about; a waterproof jacket and a pair of wellies can make the difference between your child being up during the night and a good night's sleep!
- If your child tries to move even when sitting try different types of seating. Child size swivel chairs or rocking chairs are great if you have the space for them. Even a beach ball can be used as a seat! If your child's balance isn't good enough to enable them to sit on a beach ball you can buy an inflatable peanut shaped ball that they can sit over with one leg on either side, or even a wedge shaped air filled cushion that can be placed on a dining chair for your child to sit on at mealtimes. These all provide your child with a sense of movement even when they are sitting 'still'.





Question 6 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 6

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child frequently twirl and spin throughout the day?

Children often appear to be 'on the go', and this is a natural stage of development. We need to move to strengthen and develop growing bones and muscles. If your child moves so much that it interferes with their ability to participate in daily activities then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

This is another sign that your child's sense of movement (their vestibular system) has not fully matured yet. Your child is seeking intense movement in an effort to stimulate their vestibular system. Try the following suggestions:

- The stopping and starting of movement is more stimulating (and thought to be more beneficial) than the movement itself, so playground activities where your child can change direction, come to a sudden halt, or move at both fast and slow speeds are all good. Spinning & stopping the roundabout or pushing and stopping the swing are great fun, so are games such as 'tig' and 'musical statues'.



- Use outdoor spaces as much as possible; the fresh air as well as the movement will help your child's wellbeing. Try using a see-saw or getting your child to swing on the monkey bars and then jump to the ground.
- If you need your child to sit for a while but they struggle to do so, try using a vibrating cushion with them for short periods. Intense vibration can provide the movement stimulation your child is seeking.





Question 7 - Vestibular/Balance (2 - 5 Years)

Question 7

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child rock unconsciously e.g. when sitting on the floor or when playing or watching TV?

Sometimes children seek movement unconsciously, so even when they are absorbed in eating, playing or watching a TV programme they may still rock. If this describes your child then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Have you space for a child sized rocking chair? The gentle rocking motion can be quite calming and relaxing.
- Try offering your child a weighted blanket to wrap round themselves or put over their knees. Using body awareness (proprioceptive) input can help suppress the need for movement input. Look on Pinterest for ideas on how to make your own weighted blanket or lap blanket.
- Do you have a therapy or exercise ball that your child could sit on whilst watching TV, sitting at the table and doing table-top activities? Some children prefer to lie over an exercise ball on their tummy whilst watching TV or playing with a toy or on a tablet. If your child's sense of balance is not up to them being able to sit on a therapy ball you can buy peanut shaped balls that they can use instead. These provide a bit more stability as your child can sit across it as if they were sitting on a pony. You can also buy plastic bases for exercise balls to prevent them from rolling across the floor. Look online for these. Younger children can use an inflatable beach ball in the same way.

