

Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Touch

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 TOUCH

We experience touch all the time. Our clothes touch us, when we sit our bodies are in contact with the chair, when we stand our feet are touching either the inside of our socks and shoes or are in direct contact with the ground. We can never escape touch!!

Some children can be very sensitive to touch; disliking certain textures or being very aware of the labels and seams inside clothing. Other children seem oblivious to touch and don't notice when their shoes are two sizes too small, or appear not to feel pain like the rest of us.

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Question 1 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

Question 1

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Does your child avoid getting messy or dislikes having dirty, sticky hands etc.?

Does your child become distressed if they get food or paint on their hands? Does your child wash their hands more often than other children? If so then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

If children are sensitive to touch they might try to avoid activities where they are going to get dirty or they may start the activity but become upset during it because of sticky/dirty hands. Children can become so upset by the look of something and anticipating how it will feel that it can cause them to retch or vomit.

Never force a child to touch a substance they don't like, however do continue to offer opportunities to try new touch experiences. When other children around them are able to touch new things without showing a negative reaction this can sometimes be enough of a motivator to let your child try too. Try the following strategies:

- Introduce any new textures to the back of the hand as this is less sensitive than the palm.
- Encourage your child to rub their hands together firmly before they touch the substance. Using deep pressure first will reduce their sensitivity to touch.
- Have paper towels or wet wipes nearby to allow the child to clean their hands as soon as they have completed the activity.
- Be patient with the child and follow their lead on this.
- Let them use tools e.g. sponges or paint brushes to avoid coming into contact with the substance directly.





Question 1 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

- Is there another texture that you could use as an alternative?
- Try making playdough or slime (see below for homemade recipes) and use these textures during play activities.

<p>2 cups of plain flour 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil ½ cup of salt 2 tablespoons of cream of tartar Up to 1 ½ cups of boiling water Food colouring (optional)</p> <p>Mix the dry ingredients and oil in a large mixing bowl, add the colouring to the boiling water (if using). Gradually add the water until it comes together. Once the mixture is cool get your child to knead the dough until the stickiness has gone.</p> <p>The playdough should last for up to 6 months if stored in an air tight container.</p> 	<p>Playdough Recipe</p>
<p>Ingredients</p> <p>2 cups of cornflour Water Food Colouring (optional)</p> <p>Method</p> <p>Add enough water (and food colouring if desired) to the cornflour to create a firm consistency.</p> <p>Storage</p> <p>The slime should only be kept for one day.</p> 	<p>Slime Recipe</p>

- For more information on messy play activities and ideas visit www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/play-leisure/explorative-play/.



Question 2 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child dislike or complains when having their face washed or their hair washed, cut or brushed? Do they also dislike having their nails cut?

It can be quite normal for pre-schoolers to complain when you try to wash their faces or cut their hair, and most children have outgrown any sensitivity by the time they are established in primary school. If your child experiences distress at these everyday tasks beyond the 'normal' range then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions



Washing:

- Talk through or have pictures of the steps of each activity to help your child understand the various components of the task.
- It is important to be firm and calm when getting your child to wash their face. Try not to get annoyed as this tends to make the situation worse. Be aware this may feel sore and uncomfortable.
- Let them use a face cloth or a baby wipe and do it themselves. Unless their face is really messy this will suffice.
- Stand them in front of the mirror so they can see where to wash.





Question 2 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

- Use pressure and downward strokes with a facecloth to wash your child's face and body if they are sensitive to touch.
- Tell your child when you plan to touch him or her with the facecloth.

Nail Care:

- If your child hates having their nails cut try using a nail file instead. Again sometimes letting your child do it themselves can make this easier to bear.
- Carry out nail cutting after your child has a bath when nails are soft
- Try wrapping your child's body firmly in a warm towel (leaving their hands free) while cutting their nails, or try using a nail file rather than scissors or clippers.



Hair Care:

- Try massaging your child's head firmly before washing or brushing their hair.
- Use unscented shampoo to decrease exposure to additional sensory stimuli.
- When shampooing use a deeper pressure touch as this can be more tolerable than lightly rubbing.
- If your child is sensitive to touch, try using a brush with a large head. Avoid bristles that have 'sharp' ends; look for brushes that have rubber tipped bristles. When brushing use firm strokes.
- Count, or have your child count as you wash, comb or cut their hair. Give definite time limits the task e.g. "let's count to 10 and then we will stop cutting your hair."
- Try getting your child to listen to music or watch a preferred programme on a tablet or phone when getting their hair cut.





Question 3 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child respond negatively to unexpected touch?

Does your child lash out at others who accidentally brush past them?

Strategies and Suggestions

For some children the unexpectedness of having their personal space invaded can be quite overwhelming and uncomfortable. These children are often not very affectionate, or are affectionate on their terms only i.e. they will give you a hug if they want one, but they will avoid hugs the rest of the time. Try the following strategies:



- Explain to others that your child feels light touch more strongly and may perceive it to be painful.
- Give firm hugs rather than kisses. Have your child hug first, and then return the hug.
- Teach people always to approach your child from the front and always make sure they are able to anticipate the hug or expression of affection.
- Make others aware of your child's sensitivity to touch which may result in particular behavioural responses e.g. if they do not like touch or unexpected touch they may lash out when this occurs in the nursery playground.
- Try providing additional tactile input using different techniques as this helps build up tolerance. Activities such as hand massage, letting the child hold hot or cold packs, or even holding vibrating toys can help.
- Standing in a line at nursery is difficult for a child as they don't know if someone is going to push into or touch them; being able to stand at the front or end of the line helps, as this makes likely sources of touch far more predictable.





Question 4 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child resist being cuddled?

Does your child pull away when you try to hug them? Although they may let you cuddle them on their terms.



Strategies and Suggestions

You may have to explain to other family members and friends that your child feels light touch more strongly than others and to them it feels painful.

- Try always to approach your child from the front so they know to anticipate your touch.
- Some children do not enjoy hugs & kisses from family members, or only tolerate hugs on their terms i.e. when they want one but not when you want one! Teach other family members to touch or show affection to your child firmly and directly.
- Give firm hugs rather than kisses. Take turns hugging, have your child hug first and then return the hug. Determine who gives the best hugs. By making a game out of it during a stress free situation your child is likely to cope better with displays of affection at other times.
- Some children tolerate indirect touch better so try using objects instead of giving direct contact. For example try rolling a ball over their hand/body. This is usually better when done with a reasonable amount of pressure, however once your child can cope with it try using less and less pressure as this will increase their tolerance of light touch.
- Encourage your child to hug a teddy bear, or give 'self hugs'





Question 5 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

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Is your child sensitive to certain fabrics or insists on wearing the same clothes?

Disliking certain textures is perfectly normal, however if it prevents your child from wearing their school uniform, or refusing to wear new clothes (e.g. jeans), this can be an issue.



Strategies and Suggestions

Children often have preferred textures that they like to wear. Some fabrics, seams, threads, labels etc. can feel scratchy, itchy and sore and the child will avoid wearing them. Try removing tags and labels from clothes.

- Young children often don't like the feel of denim against their skin, and can prefer the softness of jersey jogging trousers. As they get older and they see other children wearing jeans they can learn to overcome their dislike of that texture in order to be the same as their peers, however when they are younger it is better to stick to softer fabrics.
- If a child does have to wear clothes they don't like the feel of they can be very distracted or upset all day. Sometimes wearing 'under-armour' or very fine jersey long sleeved vests and long johns under their clothing can help them tolerate this better.
- Wash new clothing to take out the 'stiffness'.
- Use unscented fabric conditioner.
- Turning socks inside out so that the seam is not next to their skin can be helpful. You can buy seamless socks if you prefer.
- Keep to familiar, acceptable clothing and gradually introduce new garments for short periods.
- Allow clothes free periods at home e.g. a run around naked after a bath/in bed.





Question 6 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child avoid being barefoot?

The soles of our feet can be quite sensitive, hence the reason some of us hate having our feet touched or have very tickly soles!

If your child has sensitive feet they will likely have reacted badly as an infant to being stood barefoot on the grass or in sand. Whilst most children outgrow this by the time they start school others are left still feeling uncomfortable if they don't have some kind of covering on their feet.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Be aware your child may not like having their socks and shoes off and could be upset if made to do this.
- Warn your child that you are taking their socks and shoes off and make the activity quick so that they can get them back on again as quickly as possible.
- Getting your child to stomp or rub their feet using deep pressure will help their feet to feel less sensitive.





Question 7 - Tactile (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child seek out the opportunity to feel vibrations (from washing machines or loud speakers etc.)?

Touching vibrating things isn't usually about 'touch' but is more using your touch system to give your sense of movement a boost. If your child seeks every opportunity to sit on the washing machine or hold onto the Hoover then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

When children want to touch vibrating objects such as your washing machine or vacuum cleaner, this tends to be more about movement rather than touch. It could be that your child's sense of movement (their vestibular sense) needs more stimulus and your child is using their sense of touch to provide the extra input they are seeking.

- Let your child touch the washing machine whilst you are present. Talk to them about how it feels; "My goodness that's shaky. It's making my arm wobbly!" Try making your arms shake without touching the machine; sit in front of your child with your arms out, place your hands against your child's, palm to palm and shake!
- Play 'Simon Says' type games, or dance along to songs that give your child the opportunity to shake their limbs.
- Provide a massage/vibration toy for your child to experience a similar sensation.
- Look out for vibrating cushions and other items that may provide a similar sensory experience.

