

# 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 don't feel pain like the rest of us.

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## Question 1 - Tactile (5 - 12 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?*



### 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 then 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 the 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/wipes at hand 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.
- Is there another texture that you could use as an alternative?





## Question 1 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

- Try making playdough or slime (see below for homemade recipes) and using these textures during an activity.

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)

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.

The playdough should last for up to 6 months if stored in an air tight container.



### Playdough Recipe

### Ingredients

2 cups of cornflour  
Water  
Food Colouring (optional)

### Method

Add enough water (and food colouring if desired) to the cornflour to create a firm consistency.

### Storage

The slime should only be kept for one day.



### Slime Recipe



## Question 2 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

### Question 2

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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?**

*Whilst it can be quite normal for pre-schoolers to complain when you try to wash their faces or cut their hair most children can tolerate these activities by the time they are established in primary school. If your child still seems to experience distress at these everyday tasks beyond the time when their siblings or peers have outgrown this then answer 'yes' to this question.*



### Strategies and Suggestions

- 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.



- 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.
- 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 massaging your child's head firmly before washing or brushing their hair.
- If your child is sensitive to touch, try using a brush with a large head if they dislike having their hair brushed.
- Count, or have your child count, as you comb, wash, rinse or cut their hair.





## Question 2 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

- Give definite time limits for the task e.g. 'let's count to 10 and then we will stop cutting your hair'. Talk through or have pictures of steps of the activity to assist your child in understanding the task.

For additional strategies have a look at the 'Looking After My Body' section [www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/looking-after-my-body/](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/looking-after-my-body/) for some advice and downloadable resources.





## Question 3 - Tactile (5 - 12 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 will avoid hugs the rest of the time. Try the following strategies:

- 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 and 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.





## Question 4 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

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#### Does your child find it difficult to stand in line with other children?

*Children who are sensitive to touch tend to react negatively to other people entering their 'personal space'. This can mean that your child may last out if the child standing next to them touches them by accident. This can make standing in the dinner queue or lining up to go into class a challenge.*



#### Strategies and Suggestions

- When your child who is sensitive to touch is touched by somebody else unexpectedly they can lash out, cry or push the other person away. This is because light unexpected touch can be sore to them, can give them a fright, or make them feel itchy causing them to rub at the spot in an effort to make the sensation go away.
- Standing in a line can be very difficult for this reason as everyone pushes and moves in the line; this unpredictable behaviour is upsetting and unsettling as your child doesn't know if someone is going to push into them or touch them accidentally.
- Allowing the child to stand in front or end of the line can help. At the front of the line they only have to be worried about touch coming from one direction i.e. the person standing immediately behind them. At the back of the line they need not worry about touch at all. If they are given the job of 'door monitor' they will be able to see directly the others moving towards and past them, and will be able to deal with accidental touch because they can anticipate it better.





## Question 5 - Tactile (5 - 12 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, this can be an issue.*

*Some children only like certain bedding because the feel of the sheets against their skin is uncomfortable.*



### 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 / 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.



If a child does have to wear clothes they don't like the feel of they can be very distracted or upset all day. This can be particularly difficult if the clothes they don't like the feel of happen to be their school uniform. Sometimes wearing 'under-armour' or very fine jersey long sleeved vests and long johns under their uniform can help them tolerate this better.



Wash new clothing to take out the stiffness before asking your child to wear it. Use unscented fabric conditioner if required.

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.





## Question 6 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

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#### Does your child avoid barefoot?

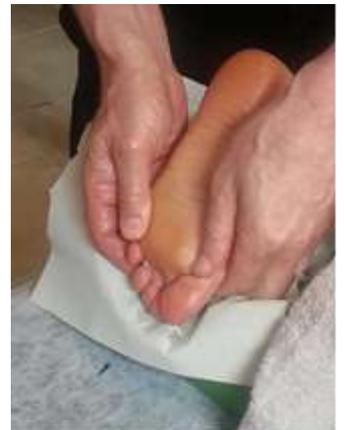
*The soles of our feet can be quite sensitive, hence the reason some of us hate having our feet touched or have very tickly soles!*

*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

- Please be aware that if your child doesn't like going barefoot they are likely to become upset if made to do this.
- If they do have to take their shoes and socks off warn them that it is going to happen and make the activity quick so that they can get their shoes on again quickly.
- Stomping and rubbing their feet (using deep pressure) before any barefoot activities will help their feet feel less sensitive.
- Spend a bit of time after bath time rubbing your child's feet firmly with the bath towel, and then massage in some body lotion using firm pressure. If this is done each night your child will become better able to cope with being barefoot at other times.





## Question 7 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

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**Does your child like to touch people or objects to the point of irritating others?**

*Some children don't process touch, or FEEL things, as well as others. When this is the case children tend to touch people and things much more than usual.*



### Strategies and Suggestions

If children are under-responsive to touch they don't feel things as well as we do. They might therefore touch things and people much more than other children in order to get a better understanding of them. Most people can just look at an object to understand it but some children have to touch it too.

Some children find it difficult to stop touching things and may need adult help to stop. A visual card could be used to let the child know to stop touching. When they are stopped they could get upset or anxious so it is important to have alternatives for them to touch or hold. This could be some kind of textured fidget toy or a small squeeze toy that they can hold in the palm of their hand.



Try making your own 'squeeze fidget' by putting one balloon inside another then filling it with flour and tying a knot on the top.

Make up a 'feely box' (visit [www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/sensory-box-touch](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/sensory-box-touch) for some ideas) of different textured toys that your child can play with at certain times during the day. Use visual aids and a timer to remind them to 'start' and 'stop'.

Provide deep pressure activities such as hand massages at regular intervals during the day. Perhaps incorporate this into your child's hand washing routine every time they go to the toilet.



## Question 8 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

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**Does your child seem to have an unusually high tolerance to pain or doesn't react as expected after having an accident e.g. having cut or injured themselves?**

*Does your child cry when they fall or bump their head? If the answer is yes then their tolerance to pain is probably perfectly normal and you should answer 'no' to this question.*



### Strategies and Suggestions

If children do not feel pain properly they can really injure themselves and may not respond appropriately by crying or telling you that they are hurt. Please check them over carefully if they have had a nasty bump and you think they may have hurt themselves.



Children who have limited communication skills may find it difficult to tell you where they are experiencing pain, especially if they have tooth ache or an ear infection. If your child's behaviour has changed suddenly please think about this as a possibility worth ruling out.



## Question 9 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

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**Does your child leave their clothes twisted on their body or doesn't seem to notice that trousers/skirts are falling down etc.?**

*Whilst most of us might be irritated by the feeling of twisted clothing against our skin, some children who don't feel touch as well as they should can be happily unaware! They may spend an entire day with their shoes on the wrong feet or their sweatshirt on back to front so that the collar is sitting across their throat, and yet be none the wiser. If this describes your child then answer 'yes' here.*



### Strategies and Suggestions

Stand your child in front of a mirror each morning before they leave for school. See if they notice if clothes are twisted or hanging out. Talk them through what items need tucked in or straightened. By doing this on a daily basis you are enabling your child to use their visual sense to help support their tactile sense. Gradually they will learn to do this for themselves (be patient and persistent; this can take a very long time!)





## Question 10 - Tactile (5 - 12 Years)

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**Do you find that your child doesn't seem to notice when their hands or face are messy or covered with food?**

*Have you ever noticed how some children go into school and come out at the end of the day looking immaculate whilst others come out covered in paint, mud, food and goodness knows what else?! If your child doesn't process touch as well as they should they may be completely unaware that they still have half their lunch stuck on their cheeks or chin, or that their hands are sticky with food or muck. If this described your child then answer 'yes' to this question.*



### Strategies and Suggestions

After each meal get your child into the habit of going to the toilet and checking in the bathroom mirror to see if they have any food on their face. By doing this you are letting your child use their visual sense to help support their sense of touch which is not so well developed.

Try using different textured face cloths or sponges when your child is washing their hands and face. Get them to use a fair amount of pressure when rubbing the cloth on their face. This helps stimulate the touch system around their mouth and in turn may then let your child become more aware of when food goes where it shouldn't!

