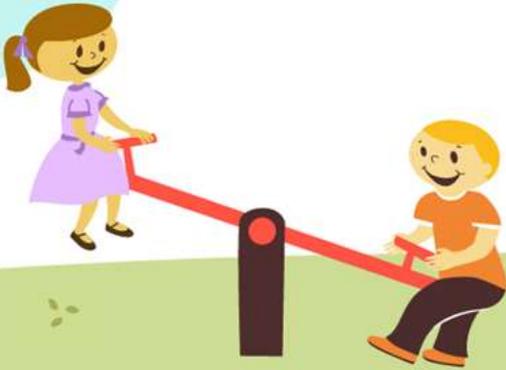


Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Body Awareness

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



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

YOUR SENSE OF BODY AWARENESS

Your sense of body awareness is also known as your **PROPRIOCEPTIVE** sense. It is proprioception that tells your body how your limbs are moving and how much force to use when lifting, squeezing or pushing things. If your sense of body awareness isn't well developed you can appear quite clumsy.

We are constantly receiving and processing information from not only the world around us but also from inside our bodies. It is our sense of proprioception (or body awareness) that tells us how our limbs are moving (and where they are in relation to the rest of our body when they are not moving!), whether they are stretching or bending, and how much force to use if we are lifting or throwing. It is your sense of body awareness that lets you know where your legs and feet are for example, when they are tucked under the table and you can't see them.

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Question 1 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

Question 1

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Does your child tend to use more force than is required and frequently break toys, or uses too much force and unintentionally hurts others?

Children who are unable to judge force properly can appear very 'heavy handed' and are often described as being rough with others. You often observe that type of behaviour in toddlers when they go to hug another infant and their mums are rushing in to prevent them from squeezing the living daylights out of them. It is not intentional, it is simply that they cannot judge force properly.



Strategies and Suggestions

Try different activities to help your child become more aware of how much force to use in different situations:

- Bouncing on a trampoline is a good way of providing extra body awareness (proprioceptive) input. If you don't have access to a trampoline try playing 'jumping beans'; hold your child's hands and jump up and down on the spot (you will probably get tired before they do!!).
- Practice ball games together; throwing is easier than catching so start with throwing games. Draw a target on the garden wall or on a pavement with chalk. Vary the distance your child stands away from the target so they learn to use different amounts of force. Move onto catching once your child can throw effectively. It is better to start with a balloon as this moves slowly and is easier for a young child to catch. If they are frightened of balloons, or likely to burst it, use an inflatable beach ball or even a plastic bag filled with air and tied shut.
- Playing at 'wheelbarrows' is good for developing upper limb strength, which in turn helps with awareness of force and pressure. If you are not strong enough to hold your child's legs then get them to 'walk' with their hands over a therapy ball.





Question 2 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child notice when their hands or face are messy or covered in food?

Because your body awareness and touch senses are so closely linked you rely on both to give your brain information about when you are messy or how much food you should be putting in your mouth. Some children eat like hamsters; with their cheeks stretched by the amount of food in their mouths. Others have food all over their faces and seem oblivious to the mess. Both are signs that their body awareness sense is not yet fully developed.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Use deep pressure massage to your child's hands, and apply gentle pressure around their mouth (i.e. wipe their face or rub your fingertips around the outside of their lips) prior to snack or meal times.
- Repeat this process after meal times to remove any food from their hands and faces. It is even better if you can carry out these activities in front of a mirror to provide additional sensory feedback through their visual system.
- Incorporate additional sensory feedback during tooth brushing. Use an electric toothbrush, not just on your child's teeth but gently on the lips, gums and inside of their mouth. Use a variety of different textures to rub gently around their mouth e.g. facecloth, sponge, soft flannel etc.
- Use social stories or visual strategies e.g. picture cards, to increase your child's understanding of the task. Get them used to carrying out the same actions each time at hand washing or teeth cleaning time.
- Teach your child to use a napkin or baby wipe immediately after mealtimes.
- Give your child a cup with a lid to decrease the likelihood of mess while they are learning this skill.





Question 3 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child seem to have an unusually high tolerance to pain? Do they not react as expected after having an accident e.g. having cut or injured themselves?

Your ability to feel pain is sensed by a combination of body awareness and touch. If these senses aren't working as well as they should your child may not process pain in the same way as others.



Strategies and Suggestions

It is difficult to change how a person processes sensory information so in the cases of children who do not perceive pain it may not be possible to change this, but it is important to make the adults around your child aware that they will need to be vigilant in case the child is hurt but is unable to feel how much.

- It is not known whether allowing your child to experience different variations of touch e.g. light and firm will help them to learn to identify these different sensations, however it will not do any harm to give them a variety of different touch and deep pressure sensations.
- Devise obstacle courses that you can set up in the living room (if it is wet) or outside (on a dry day). These could include cushions your child could jump on, laundry baskets for them to climb in and out of, old boxes that you have opened the base of for them to crawl through, and a duvet for them to crawl underneath.



- Play the 'hot dog' game. Roll your child up in a duvet and then squeeze them all over as you 'tuck the sausage into the roll'. Add 'tomato sauce' by squeezing up and down again. Do it a third time as you add the 'mustard', and then once more as you 'eat them all up!'



Question 4 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child spend a lot of time walking on tip toes?

Walking on tip toes intermittently is a common behaviour displayed by lots of children and is a typical stage of child development. If however your child is a perpetual tiptoe walker this is a different issue as prolonged and sustained toe walking can cause your child's Achilles tendons to shorten.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Make sure that you provide lots of deep pressure input to your child's feet. Do this after shoe changes and at bath times. Give your child a foot massage to increase tactile feedback. Rub briskly on the soles of their feet using a bath towel. Hold their ankles and press up on the soles of their feet to provide a gentle stretch on their Achilles tendon.
- Get your child to walk barefoot over a variety of different surfaces or textures e.g. bubble wrap, sand, grass, carpet squares, feathers etc.



- Use different textures on your child's feet such as paint brushes, loofahs, soft cloths etc. Let your child apply the texture themselves to enable them to tolerate it better.



Question 5 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child love rough and tumble play?

Often children enjoy rough and tumble play and it is a good way of developing body awareness (proprioceptive) skills. You need to supervise your child to ensure that they are getting the experiences they are seeking without hurting others unintentionally.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Provide your child with regular bursts of gross motor play. Use outdoor spaces to let them burn off some energy. Visit local soft-play areas and play-parks that have equipment for young children. Let your child bounce on a trampoline.
- Provide frequent movement breaks so that your child can run around between activities which require them to sit down.
- For younger children activities such as playing in a ball pool, lying under blankets and cushions (making sure that child can move freely and that his/her head is not covered at any time) bouncing on a gym ball, or even blowing bubbles all provide body awareness (proprioceptive) feedback.



- For older nursery children activities such as wall 'push ups', chair 'push ups', having a tug of war, being wrapped up tightly in a blanket, duvet or sleeping bag also all give extra body awareness (proprioceptive) feedback.





Question 6 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child trip or fall frequently, more than other children their age?

Does your child seem oblivious to the position of other people and things? Do they bump into furniture or door frames, even in well-known surroundings? Whilst this can be about how your child is processing vision, it can also be because their body awareness isn't fully developed.



Strategies and Suggestions

Young children often appear clumsy as they are still learning the gross motor skills associated with maintaining an upright posture and good balance. It is perfectly normal for your child to appear clumsy whilst they are learning these skills and you should encourage your child to take part in active play activities to help them develop good body awareness.



Have a look in your “[play@home](#) Toddler” book for lots of fun activities and ideas that will all help develop body awareness and balance skills.



Visit www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/play-leisure/activeenergetic-play for active play ideas.



Question 7 - Body Awareness (2 - 5 Years)

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Does your child chew on toys, clothes and other objects more than other children their age?

Mouthing is a very common way for young children to explore new things. Most babies will take objects to their mouths and suck or chew. This will gradually decrease as your child grows. We receive lots of body awareness (proprioceptive) feedback through our mouths. This can be very calming, hence the reason so many young children suck their thumbs or refuse to be parted from their dummy! Even as adults we often put our fingers to our mouths to bite our nails or pick at our lips, normally without even realising what we are doing.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Children who constantly mouth items can be using their mouths to gather information about the shape, size and texture of their toys, or they may be trying to self soothe.
- Your child could simply be at the exploratory stage of their play development and, like very young children, exploring objects through their mouth.
- If your child is still mouthing beyond what would be expected from their peers you can try to begin to teach them to explore the toy through touching with their hands rather than their mouth. Gentle reinforcement is needed as, just like thumb sucking, the child might not even realise they are doing it.
- Find acceptable alternatives that your child can chew or suck on. Baby teether toys are a good example. You can buy a teether toy that vibrates when the child bites it. The intense vibrating sensation can be very satisfying!
- Try using an electric toothbrush as part of your child's dental hygiene programme. Also try massaging round their mouth using a flannel facecloth to provide extra body awareness feedback. The additional sensory input can be enough to prevent your child from mouthing so much in between toothbrushing sessions.

