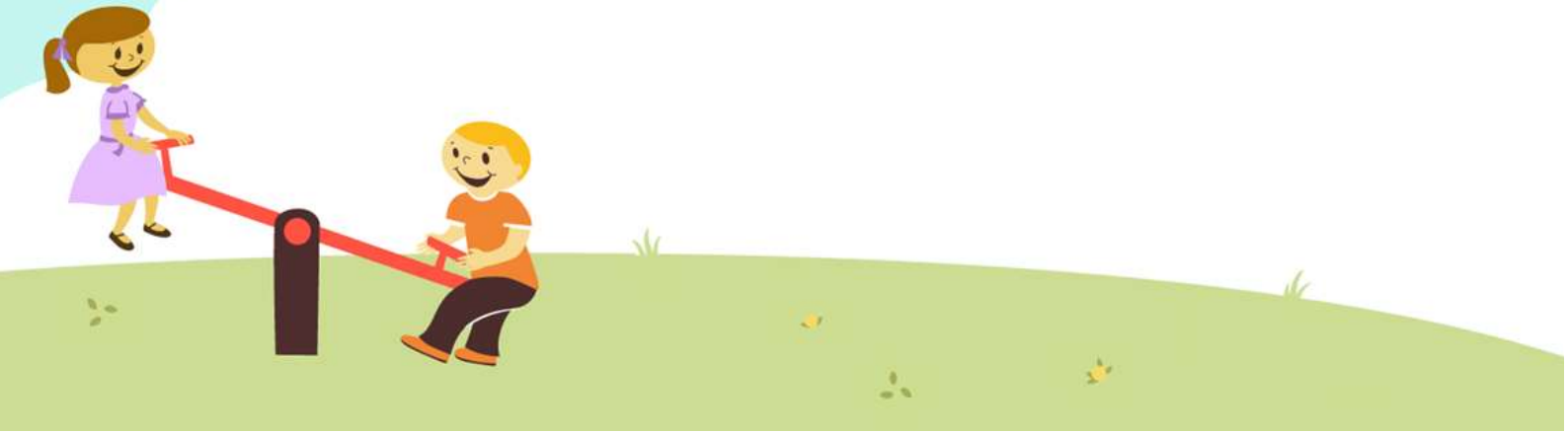


Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Movement and Balance

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



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

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.

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Question 1 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

Question 1

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

Most children are sensitive to movement and what seems like a little movement to us can seem massive to them. If your child appears to over-react to small changes in position then they may well have an overly sensitive sense of movement.



Strategies and Suggestions

Some children are oversensitive to movement and struggle to trust their sense of balance. To some children a little bit of movement can feel huge and it causes them a good deal of stress to not feel in control when they are moving, so going on swings or roundabouts is way beyond their comfort zone.

It is better to try to introduce gentle movement in a non-threatening environment than expect miracles in a public place. Try getting your child to sit on an exercise ball in the house when there are no other siblings around to knock them off their seat. Support their hips with your hands until they become confident sitting on their own and keeping their balance. Once they can do this easily start to challenge them a bit by holding their hips and rocking the ball back and forth. When they can manage this move your hands onto the ball so you are not offering any physical support and move the ball again. Once this challenge has been mastered visit the local playground at a quiet time and try using the swings. Again start small until your child feels confident then increase the amount of movement provided.





Question 2 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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

Does your child become distressed when they have to soap rinsed out their hair? Do they struggle to bend over to tie their laces?



Strategies and Suggestions

- Keep encouraging your child to try different movement experiences.
- Try introducing head movement in a gentle non-threatening way e.g. get them to bend down and touch their toes or encourage them to pick toys up off the floor. Once they can do that without difficulty then get them to bend over and look through their legs to see what is behind them.



- When trying to teach forward rolls and somersaults it is easier to start with sideways rolls; ask the child to lie on the floor, put their arms by their sides and then roll onto their tummy, and over onto their back again





Question 3 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child have poor balance?

Staying upright does not come naturally to everybody and some children take much longer to become confident standing on their own two feet, never mind the additional challenges of learning to stand on only one. If you feel your child is slower than their peers at developing good balance skills then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

- If your child has poor balance they will struggle to learn how to ride a bicycle, use playground equipment or participate in some sports.
- Children who are not confident in their own balance skills will feel very anxious when their balance is challenged, so prepare your child in advance and tell them what is going to happen.
- Provide some support whilst they participate in the balance activity and as their confidence grows gradually withdraw it.
- Using a therapy or exercise ball as a form of alternative seating in the house can help your child develop their core muscle strength as well as improve their balance skills.
- Use playground equipment to help develop these skills. Going on a swing, walking along balance beams or using a see-saw will all improve balance.





Question 5 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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Do you think that your child doesn't 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.



If your child appears to be 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

- Does your child seem to need to move all the time? Try to provide lots of opportunities for them to get the movement they crave.
- Utilise your local playground. Come home from school via the playground and let your child use up some unspent energy.
- Do you have space for a trampoline in the back garden? Do you have a friend or relative who might let your child have a shot for half an hour one evening?
- Check out your local sports centre and see if there are any groups, classes or movement activities to allow your child the opportunity to move.
- Try alternative seating options at home: use an air filled wedge shaped cushion for sitting on at meal times and for doing homework, or get your child to sit on a therapy ball whilst they are watching TV or playing on their game console.
- Have a look under the play section (www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/play-leisure) for more movement activities and ideas.





Question 5 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child fail to put their hands out to save themselves when falling?

If your or I were to trip when walking along we would automatically put our hands out to save ourselves. We usually manage to right ourselves, albeit awkwardly, and end up feeling nothing more than embarrassed. For children whose vestibular systems are slow to respond to stimulus they can end up flat on the ground before their brain realises they have moved too fast and too far in the wrong direction through space.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Your child's vestibular system is not registering movement quickly enough, or is under-responsive to movement. You need to provide your child with opportunities to experience movement and more importantly experience the sensation when movement stops or changes suddenly.
- Visit your local playground and play with your child on the roundabout; make sure they are holding on tight and spin them in one direction. Suddenly stop the roundabout and start spinning it in the other direction. Play a similar game with the swings; push your child back and forth then grab the swing and stop it. Make sure they are holding on tight!





Question 6 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child seek out all kinds of movement to the point it interferes with daily routines e.g. they can't sit still in class or they fidget?

Some children who require to move appear to be fidgeting and not paying attention. Some children though can concentrate as long as they are able to fidget at the same time.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Some children who require to move a lot appear to be fidgeting and not paying attention. Children who seek movement can often concentrate as long as they are able to fidget at the same time.
- There are lots of fidget toys available which can be provided to offer your child discreet opportunities to play with something in class without distracting other children. These can include pencil toppers, hand held fidget toys that can be kept in a pencil case or in your child's pocket, and key chain fidget toys that can be attached to a zip on a fleece or pencil case.





Question 7 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child frequently twirl or spin themselves 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.

- 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 8 - Vestibular/Balance (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child rock when sitting on the floor, sitting at a desk, or even watching TV?

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



Strategies and Suggestions

Sometimes children seek movement unconsciously so even when they are absorbed in a TV programme they may still rock. Try using the following strategies to help:

- 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 their homework? 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.

