

Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Hearing

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 HEARING

Listening to the world around us helps us make sense of where we are. Some children can be very sensitive to sound and can react badly to sudden loud noises. This is very common and is part of normal development, however some children can remain sensitive to sound for much longer than others.

If you suspect your child does not process auditory information as well as they should please complete the following questionnaire and then try using the downloadable strategies to help them.

Contents

Question 1	.....	1
Question 2	.....	3
Question 3	.....	4
Question 4	.....	5
Question 5	.....	6
Question 6	.....	7
Question 7	.....	8
Question 8	.....	9



Question 1 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 1

[Back to Top](#)

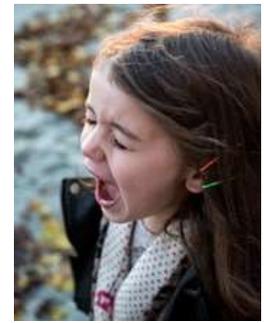
Does your child show distress at sudden or unexpected loud noises, compared to other children the same age?

If your child becomes agitated, starts to cry or covers their ears when they hear a sudden or unexpected loud noise then try the following strategies:



Strategies and Suggestions

Sound sensitivity is most common in children under the age of six. Sound sensitivity can be a normal phase that children go through. A lot of young children find loud, sudden sounds scary, particularly if they don't fully understand why the sound has appeared. Most children will adapt as they learn to understand what the noise is, where it comes from and that it isn't anything dangerous. When an unwelcome sound occurs, children with sensitivity to sound may show signs of anger, distress or panic. Children who are sensitive to noise might get upset with sounds that do not upset you, or even with sounds you are oblivious to, so this is worth considering if your child becomes distressed for no apparent reason.



- Keep track of which sounds irritate or upset your child the most and share the list with anyone else who cares for your child regularly e.g. nursery staff, grandparents, childminders. It is important that everyone responds in the same way every time as this makes it more predictable for your child.
- If your child is distressed comfort and reassure them but do not over emphasise the situation as this could make things worse.
- We do not recommend the use of ear plugs or ear defenders, even if your child finds a particular sound distressing. This is because it can make a child even more sensitive to louder sounds in the long term.
- Warn your child if possible that a loud noise is going to happen.
- Visual symbols/timetables may be helpful to prepare them in certain situations e.g. before a test fire alarm.
- Give warnings ahead of time if you are approaching a place or situation where there will be more noise.





Question 1 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

- It can be tempting to remove your child from a distressing situation. Unfortunately, this is likely to make them more sensitive to the particular sound they are avoiding. Allowing your child the opportunity to get used to the sound they dislike in a safe, controlled way can help them to become less sensitive to it. You can use videos on the internet, show your child a video clip of the sound they find upsetting, with the volume turned down, or even off completely. Prepare your child for the start of the clip, get them to press the “play” button, and allow them to alter the volume - this can give them a sense of control. Then gradually increase the volume as they become less sensitive to it. This can take time, for instance try five minutes one week at a certain level then again a few days later at a louder level.
- Reduce background noise at home or nursery if at all possible. Sometimes, if the noise is one you cannot control (for example the hum of the central heating system or the whirr of your fridge freezer) playing music quietly in the background will 'drown' out the noise.
- Shut doors or windows to reduce external noise.
- Identifying the loud noise through visual and verbal labelling can reassure e.g. “wow it’s the balloon, look!”.
- If possible involve your child in making the noise that distresses them e.g. turning on the washing machine, flushing the toilet, using the hair drier.
- Humour is a great way of removing the fear from an object. If your child is scared of the hairdryer or the washing machine, you could dress it up with big glasses and stick some funny ears on it and give it a silly voice, for instance. It’s very hard to be scared of something that you are giggling at!
- Encourage your child to play with the object that makes the noise or watch you play with it. Create fun games like blowing up the balloon and letting it go, releasing a small squeaky bit of air out, or allowing the child to stay in control by stamping or using a cocktail stick to pop the balloons.
- Make it fun! Wash teddy in the washing machine and then dry teddy’s hair with the hair drier. Try and keep a balloon off the floor with the hair drier. Lay a trail of torn up paper and use the vacuum to follow the trail and find the treasure (a favourite book or toy and time to play with you doing something they love).





Question 2 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 2

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child hold their hands over their ears to protect ears from sound?

Some children dislike certain frequencies or sounds such as cutlery against china dinner plates, or chalk against a blackboard. The noise may not be loud, in fact you may not even have noticed it, but if it causes a different response in your child than it does in other children then they are probably sensitive to sound. If your child does not become obviously upset but covers their ears at certain sounds then still try the following strategies:

Strategies and Suggestions

When your child covers their ears they are probably hearing a noise that they don't like. Help your child to find out what it is and don't try to stop them from covering their ears. If your child is particularly distressed help them to calm down before you explain what the noise is.

- Warn the child if the noise will happen again.
- Certain situations such as busy shops, may be more of a trigger; it may be best to visit such venues at quieter times.
- In places where your child regularly spends time i.e. nursery and home, consider the furnishings; soft surfaces absorb sound and hard surfaces reflect sound. Placing a rug on a laminate floor will help reduce clatter and echo, as well as softening the general sounds in a room.





Question 3 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 3

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child not appear to hear certain sounds, or doesn't respond when their name is called, but you know that their hearing is ok?

A few children have a reduced range of frequencies that they are able to hear so if a noise is too low or too high a child might miss it. If this is the case it is always worth having an Audiologist check out your child's hearing.

Some children seem unaware when they are being spoken to. You might say your child's name and not get a response from them even though you know they can hear perfectly well. This can happen if they are engrossed in an activity they really love, or because they know you are about to tell them to go to bed or tidy up. That is perfectly normal! If however it happens across lots of different settings then try the following strategy:



Strategies and Suggestions

Children can miss certain sounds if they are engrossed in an activity they really love, or because they know you are about to tell them to go to bed or tidy up their toys. That is perfectly normal! A few children however have a reduced range of frequencies that they are able to hear so if a noise is too low or too high a child might miss it. If this is the case it is always worth having an audiologist check out your child's hearing.

Some children seem unaware when they are being spoken to. You might say your child's name and not get a response from them even though you know they can hear perfectly well. This can happen if they are busy playing, or because they know you are about to tell them to do something they don't want to do. That is perfectly normal! If however your child really does appear to be oblivious to what is being said to them try the following strategy

- Get your child's full attention before telling them an instruction or action. Be aware they might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision and getting eye contact (if this is tolerated) will help your child focus.





Question 4 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 4

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child seem disturbed or intensely interested in sounds not usually noticed by other people?

Some children can hear noises that the rest of us are oblivious to such as the hum of the traffic outside, other children's pencils or crayons rubbing on the paper, the noise of the central heating system as they are trying to fall asleep etc. These can also include the noise from strip lights, the noise of the central heating system or the high frequency sounds emitted by computers or TV digiboxes. Children can have difficulty filtering these noises out and ignoring them and this can prove distracting when they are trying to concentrate.



Strategies and Suggestions

Some children are able to hear certain frequencies that the rest of us are oblivious to such as the hum of traffic outside, other children's pencils or crayons rubbing on the paper, the noise of the central heating system as they are trying to fall asleep etc. Children can have difficulty filtering these noises out and ignoring them and this can prove distracting when they are trying to concentrate.

A child might look distracted or become irritable if they need to concentrate but can't because of all the background noise they are hearing and trying to process, whilst also trying to pay attention to what the parent or nursery teacher is saying.



- Some children can concentrate better when they are listening to music. Playing music quietly in the background can reduce the irritation caused by the 'white noise' of electrical appliances or strip lighting. We all have sensory preferences though so make sure you monitor your child as they find the music more distracting.
- Explaining to your child what the sounds are and where they are coming from might help.
- Where possible consider the surroundings; soft surfaces absorb sound and hard surfaces reflect sound. Placing a rug on a laminate floor will help reduce clatter and echo, as well as softening the general sounds in a room, having curtains and blinds can help too. Close doors and windows where possible to cut down on external sound.





Question 5 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 5

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child make noises, hum, sing or scream unexpectedly?

Some children generate their own noise in an attempt to 'drown out' the sounds they cannot control. This can include making noises 'internally' for example using their mouth and throat to hum, or making noises 'externally' by repeatedly flushing a toilet, playing a musical toy over and over again, or constantly pressing the same button on an interactive toy.



Strategies and Suggestions

Some children generate their own noise in an attempt to 'drown out' the sounds they cannot control. This can include making noises 'internally' for example using their mouth and throat to hum, or making noises 'externally' by repeatedly flushing the toilet, playing a musical toy over and over, or constantly pressing the same button on an interactive toy.

- Check that overhead strip or strobe lighting isn't buzzing as some children can hear very slight noises and become distracted or distressed by them.
- Ensure one adult at a time is talking to the child, as your child may just be trying to drown out too many sounds coming in at one time and have difficulty processing them all.
- Sometimes if your child has a 'noisy brain' where lots of sounds and thoughts happen really quickly it can be hard for your child to process the sounds effectively. Use a distraction free area and reduce unnecessary sounds i.e. turn off the T.V. and any overhead lighting, if you need your child to concentrate on an activity.





Question 6 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 6

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child have difficulty paying attention?

There are many reasons why children struggle to pay attention and processing sound is only one of them. Young children have a limited attention span at the best of times, but if you feel your child is particularly distractible try the following ideas:



Strategies and Suggestions

There are many reasons why children struggle to pay attention and processing sound is only one of them. Young children have a limited attention span at the best of times, but if you feel your child is particularly distractible try the following ideas:

- Think about the noises the child might be distracted by when you are asking him/her to sit still and focus. If you can reduce the background noise for the child this will help him/her focus.
- Use play or songs to catch your child's attention so they want to listen. Movement actually helps improve concentration so allowing a child plenty opportunities to move before expecting them to sit still can help.
- Let your child hold something in their hand; playing with a fidget toy can help concentration.
- Get the child's full attention before you tell him/her the instruction or action. Be aware the child might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision (and getting eye contact with the child) will help them focus.
- Having visual cue-cards or photos or pictures that are relevant to their daily routine may help.
- Getting the right amount of sleep can have a big effect on attention. Have a look at our page on sleep <https://www.nhs.uk/health/kids/life-skills/sleep/> for some ideas or speak to your Health Visitor if sleep is an issue for your child.





Question 7 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 7

[Back to Top](#)

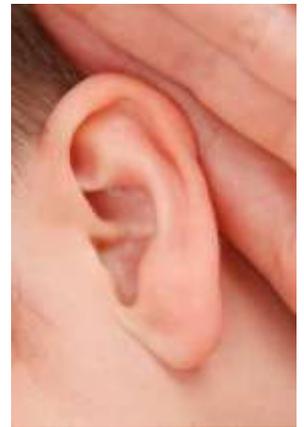
Does your child find it difficult to determine the location of sounds or voices?

If you are standing in the kitchen and calling out for your child who is sitting next door in the living room, and your child has to ask where you are before they can come and find you, then their sense of direction for the source of sound is not working properly and you should try the following:



Strategies and Suggestions

- Ensure there isn't a hearing impairment by having a routine check by an audiologist.
- Often children who seem oblivious to the source of a sound are tuning into something they find far more interesting. Try using exaggerated expression and higher tone to draw your child's attention to the sound of your voice.
- Play games that allow your child to develop their sense of sound direction e.g. when sitting together and you hear (but cannot see) a dog bark or a bus drive past ask your child where the sound is coming from.





Question 8 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

Question 8

[Back to Top](#)

Does your child like to cause certain sounds to happen over and over such as repeatedly flushing the toilet or repeatedly operating a musical toy?

Some children really enjoy certain sounds and will make them over and over to the point of distraction. Whilst this can appear quite cute when a child is 2 years old, it can be extremely irritating to others if they are still doing it at the age of 10 years old. If your child falls into this category please try the following:



Strategies and Suggestions

A child who likes to create the same sounds over and over again can do so for one of several reasons; they like the sound and enjoy controlling it, they are trying to drown out other noises they don't like and can't control, they are stimulated by hearing the sound and enjoy repeating the pleasurable sensation, or they know it will annoy you!

- If you feel that your child produces this noise in times of stress, try some relaxation and breathing techniques. You can find lots of websites, videos and apps that can help with this. Here are a few to try:



Coping Skills for KIDS

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>



Ninja Focus

<https://www.ninjabfocus.com/>

Breathing Buddies

https://youtu.be/scqFHGI_nZE



Five Finger Breathing

<https://youtu.be/DSqOW879jjA>





Question 8 - Auditory (2 - 5 Years)

- If they do it to drown out other noises they can't control, help them to understand what the noises are and why they make that noise. Distract them by doing something else.
- If they do it because they enjoy the sound then give clear boundaries around when they can make their favourite noises and how often they can repeat them. Use visual countdowns such as egg timers or stop watches to help them if they need this.
- Although this is annoying for you it makes the child feel happy and they are unlikely to want to stop. They may need your support to help them stop and move on from the game/activity.
- Be firm and be consistent. This will help them to learn to stop and move on to another task or activity, and gradually they will understand the rules.
- Allow the child opportunities at various points during the day to make their favourite noises; give them a couple of choices and use a timer to show how long they can play with their chosen toy or activity.
- Use an egg/visual timer to show the child that an activity is soon going to finish to encourage the child to stop pressing sound toys over and over again. Limit the sound before it over-stimulates the child.

