

TACTILE – under- RESPONSIVE



The tactile system tells us about what we touch. It gives us information about our bodies and what the environment around us is like. Touch receptors in our skin give us information about the different types of textures and temperatures we feel.

Our tactile system has both a protective and a learning function. The protective function alerts us to pain/heat/danger and therefore allows us to quickly move away from danger.



We also learn from touch, we explore items by touching and feeling – this function develops later and begins to override the protective functions once we learn what is safe to touch.

Those children who 'fiddle' or seek to touch with their hands, or put everything into their mouths, may be **under-responsive** to tactile stimulation. This means that it takes a lot of touch for their body to 'notice' it.



These children may have a slow reaction to being touched or hurt, and they may not notice if they are dirty. This can lead to poor tactile discrimination which in turn will affect their learning, fine motor skills, body awareness and coordination.

Activities which stimulate the touch sense can help a child to become more alert and to develop these areas.



Tactile (under responsive) ACTIVITY IDEAS



- Allow plenty of opportunity for messy play – vary the textures and type of items used, but always allow your child to explore at their own pace, and never force them to touch anything they are scared of.

eg. Paint, mud, squirty cream, jelly, baked beans, wet pasta, play sand, ice cubes. Include lots of food play that they are able to taste.

- Allow fidget toys when you are expecting your child to focus, such as stress balls, beads, chewellery, koosh balls.
- Have foot fidgets attached to chairs when you are expecting them to sit eg. Theraband, or paint rollers.
- Have ‘feely’ boxes containing a variety of ‘fiddle’ items such as gel pads, velcro, strips of fabric.
- Hide motivating items/toys in containers of lentils or sand and get your child to find them.



- Use Move’n’sit cushions
- Supervised use of chewy tubes.

• If your child is seeking tactile stimulation through smearing or playing with saliva – replace this with a more appropriate activity, that has the same feel, for the same length of time they seek it, such as using paint or foods.



- Play with resistive materials that increase proprioceptive feedback to the hands, eg. Playdough, pastry, dough.

• Vibration – Use toys that vibrate to ‘wake up’ their hands/body before asking them to complete tasks that require fine motor skills.

- Wearing body socks/lycra tops/shorts/leggings can increase tactile feedback.
- Increase proprioceptive feedback to the upper limbs to increase awareness – try weight bearing through arms in four point crawling, wheelbarrow walks, monkey bars to dangle and climbing frames.

