

# An Introduction to Sensory Integration/ Processing



## Some Possible Signs of Sensory Integration/Processing Issues

- Overly sensitive or under reactive to touch, movement, sights, or sounds in the environment
- Unusually high or low activity level
- Easily distracted; poor attention to tasks
- Delays in speech, motor skills, or academic achievement
- Coordination problems; appears clumsy or awkward
- Poor body awareness
- Difficulty learning new tasks or figuring out how to play with unfamiliar toys
- Appears to be disorganized most of the time
- Difficulty with transitions between activities or environments
- Immature social skills
- Impulsivity or lack of self-control
- Difficulty calming self once “wound up”

If you have concerns, contact your healthcare provider. Ask to schedule a full assessment so your child’s doctor can observe your child and address any concerns you may have. Be sure to keep a notebook of your concerns and observations. Share the notebook with your doctor or healthcare provider.

## Why Therapy is Important

### Therapy provides hope to families

Therapy can improve a child’s sensory processing and increase confidence, self-esteem, social participation, self-regulation, and overall skill development.



### Therapists trained in sensory integration use a play-based and child-friendly approach

Children improve their ability to process and organize sensory information in a setting where the child can engage in a variety of fun sensory experiences.

Therapy can help kids learn how to respond to a sensory rich world when playing with friends or simply enjoying life.



Pathways.org empowers parents and health professionals with FREE resources to maximize a child’s motor, sensory, and communication development.



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FREE tools to maximize child development

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# What is Sensory Integration/Processing?

Sensory integration/processing helps people “make sense” of the world around them. Think of all the sensations you experience while dressing, bathing, walking, or riding a bike.

Sensory integration is the process of using our senses to:

Quickly take in sensory information

Organize this information

Use it for success in everyday activities



We usually think of five senses: sight, sound, taste, touch (tactile), and smell. We also receive information from our body position sense (proprioception), and balance and movement sense (vestibular).

## Senses Unite!

Integrating and processing information from the tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular systems, along with the other senses (sight, sound, taste, and smell), makes it possible to successfully participate in everyday activities.



The tactile (touch) sense helps this boy hold his bat correctly. Proprioception (body position) helps him know his body is in the correct position. Vestibular (balance and movement) information helps him stay upright while swinging the bat. His vision (sight) and hearing (sound) are also key to his success in the game.

## Touch Sense (TACTILE)



The tactile sense gives us information from our skin. Every time you touch something or are touched, your skin provides you with detailed information; this comes from the tactile sense. It allows you to tell the difference between a friendly touch from a peer to the feel of a bug on your arm.

The tactile sense is helping this child lick ice cream off the cone, while not being bothered

## Body Position Sense (PROPRIOCEPTION)



Proprioception is our body position sense. Proprioception is the ability to know where a body part is without having to look, and also helps us know how much pressure we need to do certain things. We use this sense when we pick up a paper cup filled with water without spilling or holding it too tightly.

Proprioception helps this child delicately hold the egg without crushing it.

## Movement/Gravity Sense (VESTIBULAR)



Vestibular is our balance and movement sense. The vestibular sense allows us to move smoothly and balance while engaged in activities. We use this sense when riding a skateboard or sliding down a slide at the playground.

This child is using vestibular information to help her balance while walking on a curb.