

Incorporating Sensory Input into Daily Activities

Bath time: Scrub with washcloth or bath brush, try a variety of soaps and lotions for bathing, play on the wall with shaving cream or bathing foam, rub body with lotion after bath time (deep massage), sprinkle powder onto body and brush or rub into skin.

Meal preparation or baking: Let your child mix ingredients, especially the thick ones that will really work those muscles. Let child mix and roll dough and push flat. Allow your child to help you carry pots and pans, bowls of water or ingredients (with supervision, of course). Let your child tenderize meat with the meat mallet.

Grocery shopping: Have your child push the heavy cart (as long as the weight is within their capability – some stores offer kid-sized carts). Let your child help carry heavy groceries and help put them away.

Mealtime: Encourage eating of chewy foods and drinking out of a straw (try thicker substances – milkshake, yogurt, applesauce). Try having your child sit on an air cushion to allow some movement. A weighted lap blanket may be helpful as well.

Household chores: Allow your child to help with the vacuuming or moving the furniture. Let your child help carry the laundry basket or the detergent. Let your child help with digging for gardening or just create a digging-safe zone in the yard.

Play time: Reading books in a rocking chair or bean-bag chair may be beneficial. You can help your child make up obstacle courses in the house or yard using crawling, jumping, hopping, skipping, rolling, etc. Listen to soft music. Play the sandwich game (child lies in between two pillows and pretends to be the sandwich, while you provide pressure to the top pillow to your child's desired amount). Ask them "harder or softer?" as you push on the pillow. Some children will like much more pressure than you would expect. You can also go for a neighborhood walk with a wagon and have your child pull it (make it semi-heavy by loading it with something the child would like to pull around). You can do the same with a baby-doll carriage. Swimming in a pool is a wonderful activity if you have that available, as are horseback riding and bowling. Mini or full-size trampolines are excellent for providing sensory input as well. Make sure the child is using them safely. Sandboxes, or big containers of beans or popcorn kernels can be fun play-boxes too, if you add small cars, shovels, cups, etc.

Errands and appointments: Before visiting the dentist or hairdresser try deep massage to the head or scalp (if tolerated), or try having your child wear a weighted hat. Try chewy foods or vibration to the mouth with an electric toothbrush. Let your child wear a heavy backpack (weighted to their liking with books and with the straps padded as needed). Be sure to give the child ample warning before any changes in routine or any unscheduled trips or errands. Many children need predictability.

Other General Guidelines for the Home

- Keep routines and possessions organized.
- Be consistent with rules and consequences.
- Keep an activity schedule or calendar posted.
- Create specific routines for troublesome times of day (bedtime or getting ready for school).
- Discuss upcoming anticipated changes in routine at a point in time that is beneficial for your child. You will have to experiment with how early the child "needs to know."
- Try to indirectly use your child's sensory preferences for fun rewards to help you handle behavior. For example, having your child work towards an *extra* trip to go bowling or horseback riding may be helpful. However, try not to restrict movement activities when your child is being disciplined. For example, taking away recess time or playground time for not sitting at the table appropriately during dinner may not be the most effective way to deal with these issues. Your child may need that movement time, and by removing it, his or her behavior may actually become more difficult later.