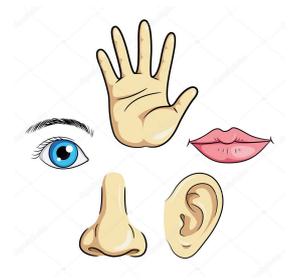




## Making Sense of our Senses

To understand our environment we receive information through our senses, our brains process the information, and respond, helping us do our everyday activities.



Most of us are familiar with the five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. However, there are two other senses we use:



- vestibular (movement and balance sense). This sense tells us where our head and body is in space, allowing us to stay upright while we sit, stand, and move.
- proprioception (body awareness sense). This tells us where our body parts are relative to each other and the force to use for different activities eg how hard to throw a ball across a field or to someone next to you.

We all experience sensation in our own unique way, some of us may overreact while others underreact to sensory input. Someone may find a certain smell nauseating while others don't even notice it or they may find a fabric irritating on their skin while others don't.

People who overreact to sensory input will tend to *avoid* the sensory experiences. A person who underreacts will often *seek* sensory experiences, eg loud music or rollercoaster rides.

Children with autism or learning disabilities often have issues receiving, processing or appropriately responding to one or more of their senses, making it hard to function in everyday life.

Our ability to use this information matures over childhood in an orderly and predictable manner. There may be some variation in the speed with which children acquire each milestone. If milestones are not reached there may be implications for the child's health, wellbeing, learning and understanding of the world around them.

The chart below has some developmental milestones and the behaviours, which may result if the milestones are not acquired. If you have a child who has not yet mastered the milestone at their current age, contact our friendly Occupational Therapists.

Age	Developmental milestones	Possible implications if milestones not achieved
0-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognises scent of mother's breast milk</li><li>• Hearing is mature</li><li>• Tracks objects with eyes</li><li>• Looks at own hands</li><li>• Responds to sounds and voice</li><li>• Reaches for nearby objects</li><li>• Actively coordinates suck, swallow, breath sequence, tongue is cupped, forward rhythmical movements of the tongue, and jaw consistently moves up and down in a coordinated pattern</li><li>• Sleeps 4-10 hour intervals</li><li>• Cries to communicate hunger, fear, discomfort</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May have difficulty with breast feeding</li><li>• May have difficulties settling to sleep</li><li>• May cry often</li></ul>

Age	Developmental milestones	Possible implications if milestones not achieved
<b>6-12 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plays 2-3 minutes with a single toy</li> <li>• Imitates gestures</li> <li>• Uses tongue to move food around mouth</li> <li>• Opens mouth to be fed</li> <li>• Sleeps 10-12 hours with only 1 awakening</li> <li>• Tolerates a range of different textured foods</li> <li>• Drinks from a cup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods</li> <li>• May have difficulties settling and may wake often during the night</li> <li>• May have difficulties socialising with parents and joint attention</li> <li>• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention</li> </ul>
<b>1-2 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bothered by soiled nappy</li> <li>• Distinguishes between edible and inedible objects (18 months)</li> <li>• Understands common dangers of hot objects, stairs, glass</li> <li>• Enjoys messy play</li> <li>• Reacts to extremes in temperature</li> <li>• Copies sounds that you make</li> <li>• Looks for an object he/she watched fall out of sight (such as a spoon that fell under the table)</li> <li>• Follows simple 1 step instructions</li> <li>• Solves problems with trial and error</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulties socialising with parents and joint attention</li> <li>• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention</li> <li>• May have delayed play skills (e.g. show little interest in toys)</li> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods</li> <li>• May have difficulties settling and may wake often during the night</li> </ul>
<b>2-3 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses toilet with assistance and has daytime control</li> <li>• Sits to look at books independently</li> <li>• Pays attention for 3 minutes</li> <li>• Begins to be able to take turns</li> <li>• Explores surroundings</li> <li>• Points to 5-6 parts of a doll when asked</li> <li>• Matches circles and squares</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have trouble socialising with peers and joint attention</li> <li>• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention</li> <li>• May have difficulties following instructions at home/child care</li> <li>• May demonstrate delayed play skills</li> <li>• May demonstrate difficulties with toilet training</li> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods (e.g. picky eater)</li> </ul>
<b>3-4 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can count 1-5</li> <li>• Knows most colours</li> <li>• Can differentiate between real and pretend world</li> <li>• Takes turns</li> <li>• Able to completely clothe self, only requiring assistance with laces, buttons, and other fasteners in awkward places</li> <li>• Feeds self without difficulty</li> <li>• Social encounters are acted out through play activities</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulties socialising with peers</li> <li>• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention</li> <li>• May have difficulties following instructions at home, childcare, kindergarten, pre-school</li> <li>• May have difficulties expressing wants, needs, thoughts and ideas</li> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods (e.g. picky eater).</li> </ul>

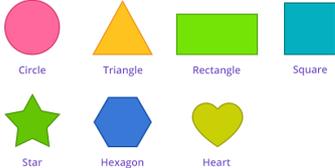
Age	Developmental milestones	Possible implications if milestones not achieved
<b>4-5 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can count 1-10</li> <li>• Knows shapes</li> <li>• Develops friendships</li> <li>• Expresses emotions</li> <li>• Able to follow rules</li> <li>• Able to sit and pay attention (e.g. mat time)</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulties socialising</li> <li>• May struggle to copy and learn from others due to poor understanding and attention</li> <li>• May have difficulties following instructions at home or kindergarten</li> <li>• May have difficulties expressing wants, needs, thoughts and ideas</li> <li>• May have difficulties sitting still</li> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods (eg picky eater)</li> </ul>
<b>5-6 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20/20 vision</li> <li>• Able to write numbers and letters</li> <li>• Begins to be able to write simple sentences</li> <li>• Begins to recognise others perspectives</li> <li>• Knows left and right</li> <li>• Begins to reason and argue; uses words like why and because</li> <li>• Can categorize objects: “These are toys; These are books”</li> <li>• Understand concepts like yesterday, today, and tomorrow</li> <li>• Can copy complex shapes, such as a diamond</li> <li>• Should be sounding out simple words like “hang”, “neat”, “jump” and “sank”</li> <li>• Can sit at a desk, follow teacher instructions, and independently do simple in-class assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulties socialising</li> <li>• May have poor attention and concentration</li> <li>• May have difficulties following instructions at home, school</li> <li>• May have difficulties retelling events</li> <li>• May have difficulties following routines</li> <li>• May have difficulties expressing thoughts and ideas verbally and in written form</li> <li>• May be easily distracted and have difficulty sitting still</li> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods (e.g. picky eater)</li> </ul>
<b>6-7 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms numbers and letters correctly</li> <li>• Recognises others perspective</li> <li>• Develops a longer attention span</li> <li>• Are willing to take on more responsibility (i.e. chores)</li> <li>• Understands fractions and the concept of space</li> <li>• Understands money</li> <li>• Can tell time</li> <li>• Can name months and days of the week in order</li> <li>• Enjoys reading a book on their own</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulties socialising</li> <li>• May have poor attention and concentration</li> <li>• May have difficulties following instructions at home, school</li> <li>• May have difficulties retelling events</li> <li>• May have difficulties expressing thoughts and ideas verbally and in written for</li> <li>• May have difficulties responding appropriately to questions</li> <li>• May have difficulty tolerating different textured foods (e.g. picky eater)</li> </ul>

Chart designed by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

*This chart was designed to serve as a functional screening of developmental skills per age group. It does not constitute an assessment nor reflect strictly standardised research.*

If a child is found to have trouble with sensory input there are things we can do to help, just call us on phone: [03 3774280](tel:033774280) or email: [admin@tpl.nz](mailto:admin@tpl.nz)