

**Sensory Symptoms Checklist  
School Version**

The following checklist is not a diagnostic tool. Rather, it is an indicator of sensory over- or under-responsiveness. The purpose of this tool is to assist in developing an appropriate treatment plan, and/or sensory diet, for an individual with sensory modulation difficulties.

Remember that it is normal for all people to be sensitive to certain sensations. Sensory modulation becomes a disorder only when it is negatively impacting a person's life (i.e. ability to pay attention, learn, socialize, relax).

\* Indicates Sensory-Seeking behavior. Sensory-Seeking is a form of under-responsiveness but these individuals seek intense sensation to make up for the under-responsiveness of their nervous systems. The general under-responders tend to be more passive and sedentary than the sensory-seekers, but still share many symptoms.

**TACTILE (TOUCH)**

**Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:**

- resistant to play in tactile materials such as rice or sand table
- wears limited variety of clothing types/styles
- avoids messy play including finger-painting and play-doh
- resists stickers or stamps on skin
- limited food preferences, sensitive to food textures
- rubs skin where touched or appears agitated when touched
- avoids standing close to others
- startles easily when touched unexpectedly
- overreacts to minor injuries

**Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:**

- often touches others\*
- struggles with fine motor tasks
- drools
- doesn't wipe runny nose
- doesn't seem to notice messy hands or face
- touches everything, brings objects to mouth frequently\*
- may stuff too much food in mouth
- seems unaware of light touch
- doesn't seem to notice cuts and scrapes
- unintentionally rough with peers
- often chews on pencil, shirt, or other objects

## PROPRIOCEPTIVE (PRESSURE AND MOVEMENT OF MUSCLES AND JOINTS)

Since proprioceptive input is always helpful to the nervous system, we do not see **over-responsivity** in this category.

### Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- \_\_\_\_\_ loves jumping, climbing, wrestling, and crashing activities\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ walks on toes\*, or walks heavily
- \_\_\_\_\_ difficulty with fine motor tasks
- \_\_\_\_\_ appears clumsy, may bump into people or objects often
- \_\_\_\_\_ sucks thumb or fingers, chews on clothes or pencils
- \_\_\_\_\_ grinds teeth, cracks knuckles\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ prefers sitting on floor or standing rather than sitting in chair\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ often wears tight-clothing or layers\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ prefers to keep jacket/coat on
- \_\_\_\_\_ self-abusive behaviors – pinching, biting, head-banging\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ moves constantly, seems unable to sit still
- \_\_\_\_\_ uses too much or too little force on objects (pencils, cups, doors)

## VESTIBULAR (MOVEMENT)

### Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:

- \_\_\_\_\_ chooses sedentary activities rather than active ones
- \_\_\_\_\_ avoids swings, slides, anything that requires feet to be off the ground
- \_\_\_\_\_ seems to dislike bus, behavioral issues on bus, or “shuts down” after getting off bus in morning

### Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:

- \_\_\_\_\_ dislikes sedentary tasks\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ is in constant motion, loves spinning, swinging
- \_\_\_\_\_ may have low muscle tone (muscles and joints seem too soft and floppy)
- \_\_\_\_\_ “W” sits on floor, slumps, leans in chair
- \_\_\_\_\_ rocks self or moves head back and forth while sitting\*

**INTEROCEPTION (INTERNAL SENSATIONS)**

**Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**

- \_\_\_\_\_ seems to have a low pain tolerance
- \_\_\_\_\_ displays significant distress about very hot or very cold weather
- \_\_\_\_\_ complains frequently of aches and pains

**Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**

- \_\_\_\_\_ continues to have bowel and bladder accidents beyond an appropriate age
- \_\_\_\_\_ apparent lack of typical hunger/thirst
- \_\_\_\_\_ high pain tolerance or inappropriate response to pain
- \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't dress appropriate for the weather
- \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't seem aware of symptoms of illness such as sore throat or nausea

**AUDITORY (SOUND)**

**Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ easily distracted and bothered by background noises
- \_\_\_\_\_ dislikes noisy places
- \_\_\_\_\_ cries, covers ears with loud or unexpected sounds
- \_\_\_\_\_ asks others to be quiet

**Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ may not consistently respond to name (rule out hearing loss)
- \_\_\_\_\_ makes own sounds frequently, enjoys silly sounds of others\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ says "What?" frequently even though hearing is intact
- \_\_\_\_\_ may appear oblivious to some sounds, has difficulty locating sound
- \_\_\_\_\_ may use self-talk to get through a task
- \_\_\_\_\_ trouble learning to read, or behind in reading
- \_\_\_\_\_ frequently needs instructions to be repeated

**VISUAL**

**Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ bothered by bright lights, sun
- \_\_\_\_\_ dislikes visually busy places (cafeteria, playgrounds, cluttered rooms)
- \_\_\_\_\_ avoids eye contact
- \_\_\_\_\_ prefers dim lighting, shade
- \_\_\_\_\_ rubs eyes a lot, may get headaches during schoolwork

**Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ loves shiny, spinning or moving objects\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ difficulty with eye-hand coordination tasks (catching a ball, stringing (beads, tracing and writing)
- \_\_\_\_\_ loves action-packed, colorful t.v. shows and electronic games\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ difficulty distinguishing between similar letters and shapes
- \_\_\_\_\_ difficulty with visual-tracking, may lose place frequently while reading

**GUSTATORY AND OLFACTORY (TASTE AND SMELL)**

**Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ talks about smell a lot, notices odors others don't notice
- \_\_\_\_\_ plugs nose, avoids places with strong smells (cafeteria)
- \_\_\_\_\_ may have very limited food preferences

**Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ smells and licks inedible objects such as toys and play-doh\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ likes strong odors such as perfume, cleaning products, and gasoline\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ prefers strongly flavored foods - spicy, salty, bitter, sour, sweet\*

\*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. See note at top of form.