



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.