

Many times, parents are worried that their child isn't quite the same as other children (either peers or siblings). It can be concerning when children have difficulties with simple day to day things like brushing their hair, or teeth, cutting their nails, putting on their clothes or not sleeping. This has led many parents to ask themselves whether there could be 'something' wrong. That something could very well be Sensory Processing Disorder.



A Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is a neurological condition that results when the brain is unable to integrate sensory information of sight, sound, smell, taste, temperature, pain, body position and movement sensation adequately. Normally, the brain uses information from these senses in order for the body to make sense of and interact with the environment appropriately. Usually this

process occurs automatically, without conscious thought. However, for some children, extensive effort and attention is required to perform even the simplest tasks that should not require conscious thought.

Following are components that make up the body's sensory processing system:

- **Auditory Sense:** The ability to discriminate between background noise and communication.
- **Visual Sense:** The discriminating and processing of what the eyes are seeing, and the ability to modulate visual stimuli to block out extraneous information.
- **Tactile Sense:** Helps to make sense of the various touch sensations, and is vital for growth, development and self-protection.
- **Olfactory (Smell) Sense:** Necessary for a proper sense of smell in order to discriminate among odors, enhance detection of odors and filter out offending odors
- **Gustatory (Taste) Sense:** Allows us to discriminate between safe and harmful foods and is critical to keeping a regulated and stable internal body environment.
- **Vestibular Sense:** Input from the inner ear about equilibrium, gravitational changes, movement experiences, and position in space.
- **Proprioceptive Sense:** Input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.



## Signs And Symptoms

### Signs of Auditory Dysfunction:

- Always tapping hands or feet
- Television or music must be excessively loud
- Loud or unexpected sounds startling

### Signs of Visual Dysfunction:

- Avoids bright lights/flashes
- Avoids eye contact or shifts gaze

### Signs of Tactile Dysfunction:

- Avoids certain textures such as blankets, sheets and socks
- Resists touch from other people
- Wind causes fear
- Does not like water in the ears
- Showers are avoided
- Over-reacts to minor injuries
- Wipes messy hands frequently
- Socks have to be worn just right
- Refuses to walk barefoot on certain surfaces
- Touches things repeatedly that are soothing
- Refuses to wear clothing, likes to be naked

### Signs of Olfactory Dysfunction:

- Air fresheners cause distress
- Smells non-food objects

### Signs of Gustatory Dysfunction:

- Craves spicy, salty or sour flavors
- Chews on sleeves, hair, fingers non-food items
- Licks everything, including people and objects
- Bites self and/or others
- Gags with textured foods and is a picky eater
- Tooth brushing causes distress

### Signs of Vestibular Dysfunction:

- Loses balance easily/appears clumsy
- Is in constant motion, does not sit still
- Craves fast, spinning or intense movement
- Never just walks; always hops, skips or stomps
- Loves to hang upside down

### Signs of Proprioceptive Dysfunction:

- Always wants to be carried or held
- Prefers tight hugs, firm touch
- Grasps objects too hard
- Hurts others while playing
- Craves vibration
- Stairs or uneven surfaces cause fear

