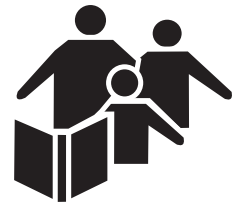


Just-Right Sensory Play



Young children receive input from their surroundings throughout the day. Their responses to what they see, hear, feel, taste, and smell are influenced by how they process the world around them. Balancing the amount, type, and frequency of activities is an important component of just-right sensory play. Here are some things you can do to help when children show high and low sensitivity to various senses:

Sight and Sound

- Dimming lights, using muted colors, and decluttering the room (walls, shelves) can minimize visual stimulation.
- Sound machines, relaxing music or nature sounds, and white noise can help to block some of the overstimulating sound in the environment. Noise-blocking headphones also can be used.



Taste and Smell

- Teething rings or cold washcloths can provide oral input for those young children who need it.
- Irritating smells should be avoided. Soothing smells might help a child relax or focus on a task.



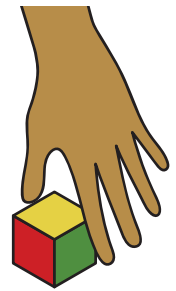
Gravity and Movement

- Swings, teeter totters, rocking toys, ride-on toys, small indoor trampolines, and baby yoga can all provide needed movement input.
- Heavy work—tossing beanbags into a bucket, pushing a toy stroller filled with weighted objects, push-ups, playing catch with weighted balls, or army crawling—provides joints and muscles with input.



Touch

- Play dough, shaving cream, dry pasta, rice, cornmeal, fabric, and ice cubes all provide sensory input. Each of these can be put in plastic zipper bags to minimize the “feeling” for children who have difficulty touching messy things.
- Sand and water play are also easy ways for young children to receive sensory input. By changing the temperature of the water or adding objects that allow pouring/dumping, you can raise the sensory input.



Watch your child’s sensory signals to decide whether he is getting too much, or not enough, input from the environment. Those cues will help you plan activities or modify the environment to provide a just-right sensory day for your child.

As always, contact your child’s health care provider or early intervention provider, such as an occupational therapist, with questions.

 For more information, visit the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse at <http://eiclearinghouse.org>

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Early Intervention.

