

A2 - Using my sense of touch

The **tactile** sensory system is the sense of **touch** information from your body that informs you of:

- the **protective touch system**: responds to light or unexpected touch (including heat and pain)
- the **discriminative touch system**: tells you where and what is being touched and the qualities of an object, hard, soft, sharp, dull

Everyone has a different threshold to sensory input. Some people have a more sensitive tactile system that limits or delays exploration of all or select items (may overreact to light touch or someone coming too close to them, to slimy or wet looking objects, or hard scratchy items). This may result in the child excluding themselves if they anticipate they may be touched or they may neglect to use their hands to prop weight through the floor, as in crawling to strengthen upper limbs, or to support stability in transfers up from the floor.

They may avoid climbing or other activities that require in-hand grasps, which will significantly impact on a child's functional hand skill development.

They may prefer to move independently around the room or outdoors and have greater achievement using visual learning to develop skills.

Self-care are may be affected with poor use of cutlery or dislike of haircutting or washing, etc. They may be tactile seeking with constant fidgeting, stroking or exploring with their hands.

Additional adult support will be required to help with increasing the tolerance and acceptance of unfamiliar or new activities for sensory skill development, to facilitate activities which integrate tactile or touch learning concepts (to interact with their world through touch stimulus), combined with vestibular (movement) and proprioceptive (firm compression) sensations.

Activities

Introduce the activities at a graded level, within the child's individual level of tolerance and achievement.

Before or during tactile learning strategies, it will be beneficial to complete additional movement activities to obtain a calmer or more responsive learning state such as:

- soft play
- jumping
- music
- all activities that require a change in head positioning (off upright)

Monitor for any negative responses such as gagging or further withdrawal – if occur, discontinue use. Expose the child to a wide range of textures and messy play concepts using graded challenges (less challenging to very challenging).

- **Dry or hard textures**: rice, lentils, pasta, sand
- **Soft textures**: playdough, fabrics (fur or fleece), soft toys
- **Wet textures**: paint, wet sand, soapy water
- **Slimy or lumpy textures**: jelly, cornflour and water, shaving foam, cooked spaghetti

Add items to heighten play such as: play mobile people, small animals, dinosaurs or cars etc. Try using safe mirror panels to smear on or receptacles to collect dig or pour

Add vibration to enhance the sensations and sounds.

Frequency of use: Complete 10-15 minutes sessions every day or at least three times a week.