



Common Signs of Childhood Sensory Issues

Childhood sensory issues often begin to emerge around the ages of two to three years old.

Hypersensitivity. This is when the child in question is overly sensitive to common sensory situations. In these instances, the child will attempt to avoid these sensory situations that cause them sensitivity. This is also called sensory avoiding.

Hyposensitivity is the opposite. It is where the child is under sensitive to stimuli and is seeking sensory input. This can also be referred to as sensory-seeking behavior.

Children with autism often have sensory issues, and noticing these sensory issues is often one of the first signs of autism, which leads most parents to get their child evaluated and later diagnosed with autism.

However, children can have a sensory disorder without having autism. One such disorder is called Sensory Processing Disorder, which is where a child will have difficulty with sensory situations and not have autism.

1. Oral Fixation – Chewing Non-Food Objects

This one may be a particularly challenging sensory issue to pinpoint, as many children chew on non-food objects. Whether it is to relieve stress, boredom, or they simply enjoy the sensation, it may be a sign that your child has an oral fixation or a need to chew on objects.

2. Sensitivity to Loud Sounds

Does your child cover their ears when you turn on the vacuum cleaner? Or get upset when you put a dish in the sink too loudly? This is due to having a type of hypersensitivity to loud noises. It can cause some distress when they hear a loud noise that they didn't expect.

3. Food Aversions

Do you have a picky eater who can't tolerate the texture or taste of certain foods? We often think our child is overly picky about what they will and won't eat, but then discover that some children have food aversions, where they truly cannot eat certain foods due to their taste or texture.



4. Sensitivity to How Things Feel

One of the most common sensory issues is the way things feel on a child's skin. Whether it's the sensitivity with certain types of clothing material, the tags on the clothing, or even if it's long or short sleeves, shorts, or pants – these are sensory issues to how things feel and how your child can tolerate them on their skin.

5. Difficulty With Social Situations

Does your child often sit on the sidelines and watch other children play without joining in?

Many children with sensory issues often struggle to know how to join in and play with other children, or they have difficulty dealing with sensory issues that arise from playing with others, such as loud noises, physical contact, and a fear of being around others.

6. Toe-Walking

Toe walking happens more frequently in children with autism spectrum disorder than in children who don't have ASD. One large study found that 9% of children on the spectrum were toe walkers. The same study found that less than 0.5% of children without an autism diagnosis were toe walkers.

The causes for this increased rate are unclear because there's no direct link between autism and toe walking. It may be that tightened heel muscles restrict the range of movement in your child's ankles.

Toe walking in individuals with autism may also be related to sensory issues. Many children with autism have a dysfunctional vestibular system. The vestibular system is responsible for providing your brain with feedback about motion, position, and spatial orientation. It may be responsible for toe walking.

7. Difficulty Falling Asleep

Almost every child experiences trouble falling or staying asleep at some point during childhood. However, if your child experiences this issue every single night and nothing seems to help, they may have sensory issues and require extra support to get to sleep.



8. Poor Balance

Is your child accident-prone? Does it seem like they just bump into everything or fall over constantly? If so, your child may be experiencing poor balance or coordination due to sensory issues. Some children have difficulty controlling their own bodies or judging how to navigate around objects rather than into them.

9. Overly Fidgety – Repetitive Movements

Whether it's the leg shaking or twiddling with their fingers, children do fidget sometimes. However, when it becomes repetitive or constant, it may be a sign of sensory issues that may require attention.

11. Purposefully Crashing Into Objects

Does your child jump from one couch to another or constantly crash into things? Many children with sensory issues often engage in sensory-seeking behaviors, such as running or throwing themselves into something to experience the impact.

12. Difficulty With Change

Routine is key! Of course, a routine is important for all children, but for those with sensory issues, it is their lifeline. Making even minor changes to routines can cause children with sensory issues to become very upset and experience meltdowns. Having their routine changed really does cause confusion and unexpected events, which can lead to your child's world feeling out of control.

13. Bothered By Bright Light

Does your child cover their eyes in the car or when they go outside? Some children have an extreme sensitivity to bright lights, such as sunlight.

14. Is Overly Rough When Playing

Some children with sensory issues are just not very sensitive to touch and really do not know their own strength when it comes to playing with other children. Unfortunately, this often leads to rough play and unintentional injury to another child.

15. Often Breaks Toys Or Other Objects

Children with sensory issues, such as sensory-seeking behaviors, often feel the need to "pop" or "rip" things in their hands to get that stimulation. Whether it's window blinds, pieces of paper, or toys, sometimes we are at a loss when it comes to this sensory issue.

16. Fight or Flight



This is probably the most frightening sensory issue. Children with sensory issues can feel the need to fight or flight when they are mad or sometimes for no reason at all.

Can A Child Outgrow Sensory Issues?

Most of the time, sensory issues are identified during childhood and some are outgrown by adulthood. However, some sensory issues may persist from childhood into adulthood.

It really depends on the child and how these sensory issues are handled as they grow up.

How Can I Help My Child With Sensory Issues?

One of the best ways that I have found to help my children with sensory issues is through occupational therapy and also using therapy tools.