|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sensory Processing Issues |  |
| What is it? | |  | | --- | | An [over- or under sensitivity to sensory input](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/sensory-processing-issues-your-questions-answered) such as sights, sounds, flavours, smells and textures | |  | |
| Things you may notice  A child may shift inconsistently  between over and under sensitivity | **Oversensitivity:**  Has trouble focusing; can’t filter out distractions  Dislikes being touched  Notices sounds and smells that others don’t  Has meltdowns, flees or becomes upset in noisy, crowded places  Fears for his safety even when there’s no real danger  Has difficulty with new routines, new places and other change  Shifts and moves around because he can’t get comfortable  Is very [sensitive to the way clothing feels](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/15-ways-to-help-your-child-cope-with-tactile-sensitivity)  **Undersensitivity:**  Constantly needs to touch people or things  Has trouble gauging others’ personal space  Seem clumsy or uncoordinated  Shows a high tolerance for pain  Plays roughly and takes physical risks |
| Possible emotional and social impact | Feeling anxious in or avoiding crowded and noisy places can make it hard to socialise.  Peers may avoid or exclude an undersensitive child because he plays too roughly or doesn’t respect their [personal space](https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/common-challenges/picking-up-on-social-cues/at-a-glance-teaching-your-child-about-personal-space). |
| Sensory Processing Issues |  |
| Professionals who may be available to help  These will vary depending on availability in your area | [Occupational therapists](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/therapies/occupational-therapy-what-you-need-to-know): Help kids learn coping skills for challenging situations  Provide [sensory integration therapy](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/therapies/sensory-integration-therapy-what-you-need-to-know) that helps kids respond to sensory input in an appropriate way  Clinical child psychologists: Provide behavior therapy to teach kids skills to manage their actions and interactions. Provide [cognitive behavioral therapy](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/therapies/faqs-about-cognitive-behavioral-therapy) to help with emotional issues related to their sensory processing issues. Diagnose ADHD and mental health issues that may co-occur with sensory processing issues. May also evaluate for learning issues  Developmental-behavioral pediatricians: Prescribe medication for anxiety to relieve panic responses |
| What schools may provide  These will vary dependant on need and stage of schooling | [Accommodations](javascript:void(0);) and/or occupational therapy, under a 504 plan or an IEP. Child might be eligible for an IEP under the category of “other health impairment,” especially if he also has ADHD.  Examples of accommodations might include:  A seat away from distracting sources of noise  Sensory breaks  Physical activity to help regulate emotions, behaviour and need for movement  Noise-cancelling headphones or ear buds to reduce stimulation in busy places like assemblies  A chair that is a good fit for him so he can put his feet flat on the floor and rest his elbows on the desk  An inflated cushion or pillow so he can both squirm and stay in his seat |
| Sensory Processing Issues |  |
| What you can do at home | [Track your child’s behaviour patterns](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/understanding-childs-challenges/observing-taking-notes/observing-your-child-specifics-to-look-for) so you can anticipate tough situations for him  Prepare your child for social gatherings or new situations so he knows what to expect  Keep earplugs or ear buds handy  Find outlets for your child’s energy such as exercise routines, sports or music  Teach your child about dangerous situations he may not be sensitive to, such as bitter cold and burning heat  Buy divided plates if he’s bothered when different foods touch  Install and use dimmer switches or coloured bulbs to modify lighting  Shop with your child so he can pick out clothes that are comfortable for him  Look for [tagless, seamless clothes](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/sensory-processing-issues/6-clothing-solutions-for-kids-with-sensory-processing-issues) in super-soft fabrics |