



Sensory Symptoms Checklist: School Version (SSC-SV)

This checklist is not a diagnostic tool; rather, it is an indicator of sensory over- or under-responsiveness. The purpose of this tool is to assist in developing an appropriate treatment plan and/or sensory diet for an individual with sensory modulation difficulties.

Remember: It is normal for all people to be sensitive to certain sensations. Sensory modulation becomes a disorder only when it negatively impacts a person's life (i.e., ability to pay attention, learn, socialize, relax).

The asterisk (*) indicates sensory-seeking behavior. Sensory Seeking is a form of under-responsiveness, but these individuals seek intense sensation to compensate for the under-responsiveness of their nervous systems. In general, under-responders tend to be more passive and sedentary than the sensory cravers, but they still share many symptoms.

TACTILE (TOUCH)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- resistant to play in tactile materials such as rice or sand table
- wears limited variety of clothing types/styles
- avoids messy play including finger-painting and Play-Doh
- resists stickers or stamps on skin
- limited food preferences, sensitive to food textures
- rubs skin where touched or appears agitated when touched
- avoids standing close to others
- startles easily when touched unexpectedly
- overreacts to minor injuries

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- often touches others*
- struggles with fine motor tasks
- drools
- doesn't wipe runny nose
- doesn't seem to notice messy hands or face
- touches everything, brings objects to mouth frequently*
- may stuff too much food in mouth
- seems unaware of light touch
- doesn't seem to notice cuts and scrapes
- unintentionally rough with peers
- often chews on pencil, shirt, or other objects

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.



PROPRIOCEPTIVE (PRESSURE ON MUSCLES AND JOINTS)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

Since proprioceptive input is always helpful to the nervous system, we do not see **over-responsivity** in this category.

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- loves jumping, climbing, wrestling, and crashing activities*
- walks on toes* or walks heavily
- difficulty with fine motor tasks
- appears clumsy, may bump into people or objects often
- sucks thumb or fingers, chews on clothes or pencils
- grinds teeth, cracks knuckles*
- prefers sitting on floor or standing rather than sitting in chair*
- often wears tight-clothing or layers*
- prefers to keep jacket on
- self-abusive behaviors – pinching, biting, head-banging*
- moves constantly, seems unable to sit still
- uses too much or too little force on objects (pencils, cups, doors)

VESTIBULAR (MOVEMENT)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- chooses sedentary activities rather than active ones
- avoids swings, slides, anything that requires feet to be off the ground
- seems to dislike bus, behavioral issues on bus, or “shuts down” after getting off bus in morning

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- dislikes sedentary tasks*
- is in constant motion, loves spinning, swinging
- may have low muscle tone (muscles and joints seem too soft and floppy)
- “W” sits on floor, slumps, leans in chair
- rocks self or moves head back and forth while sitting*

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.



INTEROCEPTION (INTERNAL SENSATIONS)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- seems to have a low pain tolerance
- displays significant distress about very hot or very cold weather
- very hot or very cold weather
- complains frequently of aches and pains

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- continues to have bowel and bladder accidents beyond an appropriate age
- apparent lack of typical hunger/thirst
- high pain tolerance or inappropriate response to pain
- doesn't dress appropriate for the weather
- doesn't seem aware of symptoms of illness such as sore throat or nausea

AUDITORY (SOUND)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- easily distracted and bothered by background noises
- dislikes noisy places
- cries, covers ears with loud or unexpected sounds
- asks others to be quiet

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- may not consistently respond to name (rule out hearing loss)
- name (rule out hearing loss)
- makes own sounds frequently, enjoys silly sounds of others*
- says "What?" frequently even though hearing is intact
- may appear oblivious to some sounds, has difficulty locating sound
- may use self-talk to get through a task
- trouble learning to read or behind in reading
- frequently needs instructions to be repeated



VISUAL

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- bothered by bright lights, sun
- dislikes visually busy places (cafeteria, playgrounds, cluttered rooms)
- avoids eye contact
- prefers dim lighting, shade
- rubs eyes a lot, may get headaches during schoolwork

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- loves shiny, spinning or moving objects
- difficulty with eye-hand coordination tasks (catching a ball, stringing beads, tracing and writing)
- loves action-packed, colorful TV shows and electronic games*
- difficulty distinguishing between similar letters and shapes
- difficulty with visual tracking, may lose place frequently while reading

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.

GUSTATORY AND OLFACTORY (TASTE AND SMELL)

Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness

- talks about smell a lot, notices odors others don't notice
- plugs nose, avoids places with strong smells (cafeteria)
- may have very limited food preferences

Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness

- smells and licks inedible objects such as toys and Play-Doh*
- likes strong odors such as perfume, cleaning products, and gasoline*
- prefers strongly flavored foods: spicy, salty, bitter, sour, sweet*

*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior.