



# SENSORY DIETS

## What is a sensory diet?

A sensory diet is a set of activities that target an individual's specific sensory needs. A sensory diet may help to manage or reduce the impact of any sensory processing challenges that may affect attention, behaviour, learning and/or skills development.

A sensory diet aims to be flexible, as individual needs change the sensory diet aims to reflect this. Changes can be seen across different ages, environments, transitions, and life domains. A sensory profile may be completed to assist with identifying sensory preferences and tailoring a sensory diet to suit the individual.

A well-balanced sensory diet is important, just as a well-balanced meal diet is important. For example, we cannot survive on broccoli alone, just like an individual cannot function with only one type of sensory input, therefore a sensory diet should target all different sensory elements.

## What needs to be taken into consideration?

- The individual's goals, interests and motivations.
- The environment (school, home, community, work).
- What tools and resources are available and appropriate for use within the environment. For example, Trampoline, swing set, heavy work, fidget toys.
- Frequency and intensity of sensory activities. For example, when is this needed? how often is this required? how intense?
- What can be achieved with existing routines considering time and availability of parents/supports who will be implementing the sensory diet.
- The individual's awareness of their own sensory needs and input that's required.
- The individual's support networks (teacher, carer, parents) awareness and understanding of their sensory needs.

### Why are sensory diets important:

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|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balances sensory input  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aids in completion of daily activities                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assists with emotional regulation to support participation        | <input type="checkbox"/> Prevents an individual from becoming dysregulated      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assists to maintain optimum arousal e.g. attention, concentration | <input type="checkbox"/> Can reduce the frequency and intensity of meltdowns    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assists with establishing routine                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Educates individuals on their sensory processing needs |

*The next page includes examples of sensory diets.*



Proprioception  
(Body Awareness)



Vestibular  
(Movement & Balance)



Tactile  
(Touch)



Visual



Auditory



Olfactory



Oral

- Example school: A school aged girl struggles to sit still in school and focus throughout the day. Her dad makes sure she has 5 minutes to jump on a [small trampoline](#) in the house before she leaves. Then she rides her bike to the bus stop and has a [stretchy band](#) around her chair at school that she can kick when she feels like she needs to move and can't.
- Example work: A woman is really nervous going to work every day, to help her she [carries a stress ball](#) in her pocket that she can squeeze whenever she needs to. She also has crunchy foods in her lunch, which help her stay calm.
- Example home: My daughter is a seeker and loves to play rough. Throughout our normal daily interactions, I make effort to give her big deep hugs if she walks by or rough house with her for a minute or two. This has become habit for me now and something I rarely think about. It isn't scheduled into our day at any specific time.

Xavier is 9 years old. He has a diagnosis of Autism. He wakes up and is immediately "off the walls"- seeking input. He might benefit from deep proprioceptive input right away and every 1-2 hours after that to keep him modulated throughout the day.

**8am** he jumps on his trampoline.

**10am** he crashes into the couch pillows.

**12pm** he blows up 4 balloons.

**2pm** he has a thick smoothie through a straw.

**4pm** he reads a book under a weighted blanket.

**6pm** he has some crunchy carrots with dinner.

**8pm** he listens to calming music while watching a lava lamp in a room with calming essential oil.

Just remember, if tomorrow he wakes up and is cranky and irritable (while bouncing "off the walls") his sensory diet activities could possibly need to be totally different.

Then there is Rory. He is 13 years old with a diagnosis of Sensory Processing Disorder. He wakes up happy, but by the time he is done with breakfast, he is on the verge of an emotional breakdown. He might benefit from some calm auditory or visual input; he might only need this input sporadically throughout the day.

**8am** he watches a calm projector on the wall with dim lights

**10am** he throws a balloon up and catches it 10x

**12pm** he uses noise cancelling headphones while completing a typing activity

**2pm** he goes outside and rakes the front lawn for 20 minutes while whistling his favorite songs

**4pm** he plays flashlight tag after he carries the laundry upstairs for his family

**6pm** he does 15 minutes of yoga ending with down-dog (an inversion).

**8pm** he takes a warm bath with lavender essential oil and blows bubbles in the bath through a straw.

#### Helpful links:

- [https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/therapies/download-sample-sensory-diet?\\_ul=1\\*13ask8p\\*domain\\_userid\\*YW1wLVBfVzc0ZDZiINVozZUxOa0lLOGt0ZGc](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/therapies/download-sample-sensory-diet?_ul=1*13ask8p*domain_userid*YW1wLVBfVzc0ZDZiINVozZUxOa0lLOGt0ZGc).
- [https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Fact%20Sheets/Factsheet\\_Sensory-processing\\_20170306.pdf](https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/uploads/documents/Fact%20Sheets/Factsheet_Sensory-processing_20170306.pdf)
- <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/sensory-processing/sensory-diet/>
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/sensory-processing-difficulties>

For more information and to find out how Geronimo can support you to implement a sensory diet please visit [www.geronimo-ot.com.au](http://www.geronimo-ot.com.au)

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