

# Sensory Diet



## What is it and why would you use it?

A sensory diet is a strategy that can help children with sensory processing issues. It includes a series of physical activities or input's that can help your child to engage in their learning. It has nothing to do with food! An occupational therapist (OT) can work with you to design a sensory diet tailored to meet the child's needs.

A sensory diet consists of personalised activities throughout a pupil's day to support them with regulating their sensory needs. A sensory diet may be consistent or may change daily depending on the sensory needs of that pupil at any given time.

## Who is it for?

Many children experience difficulty with processing sensory information. Pupils may be hyposensitive (sensory seeker) or hypersensitive (sensory avoider). This can vary among the 8 senses and may change throughout the pupil's day.

For example, if your child is presenting as being low arousal (meaning sluggish) her routine might include:

- 20 jumping jacks
- Bouncing on a therapy ball 20 times
- Holding a zen bug yoga pose for 10 seconds.

They will then repeat this set a number of times. Each session should last 10 to 15 minutes but the effects can last for hours. Once your child's routine is set, they will do it two or three times throughout the day.



Sensory diets should be created for any pupil whose sensory seeking / avoiding behaviour is becoming a barrier to their learning and affecting their wellbeing.

## What does it look like?

A sensory diet needs to be personalised to meet the needs of an individual pupil. The child's OT will observe them to see what sensory input they seek or avoid. Here are some standard activities they draw on to create a sensory diet.

- Jumping jacks or lying on the ground and doing snow angels
- Somersault or log rolling (rolling back and forth)
- Swinging on swings or climbing ladders and sliding down slides in a playground
- Hopping up and down or push ups (these could be against the walls or on their knees)
- Bouncing on a therapy ball with feet on the ground whilst clapping
- Rolling on a therapy ball on their stomach, back and forth
- Rolling a therapy ball on their back whilst they lie on the ground
- Yoga poses like downward dog or zen bug, holding position for at least 10 seconds
- Facing a wall and pushing as hard as possible (variations include standing sideways and pushing against the wall with a shoulder, or pushing while sitting with the back against the wall)
- Animal walks such as crab walk (on all fours facing sky) or bear walk (on all fours facing ground)



A sensory diet may also include other activities that target specific sensory issues. These could include the use of fidget toys for circle time, wobble cushions for class work or weighted blankets. They might also include chewing crunch foods throughout the day.