

Sensory Differences in ASD

Many individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have challenges in sensory areas that affect their daily lives. They can be hyper and/or hyposensitive to any of the senses.

Hyposensitive Examples (Under-Sensitive)

- Person may seek sensory input by:
 - Banging objects loudly.
 - Spinning.
 - Rocking.
 - Showing a preference for spicy food or other strong flavors.
 - Smelling or sniffing objects.

Hypersensitive Examples (Over-Sensitive)

- Bothered by loud places, particular noises (e.g., squeaky door), fluorescent lights, scented products, and certain fabrics or textures.
- Food sensitivities (strong flavors or certain textures) may lead to limited diets.
- Interference with hygiene (hair brushing and/or teeth brushing may be painful).
- Sensitivity to touch.
- Fine motor difficulties (handwriting, buttons, shoelaces, etc.).



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Signs of Sensory Overload

- Covering of ears/eyes.
- Putting head down.
- Wearing a hood, sunglasses, headphones, or hat indoors.
- Appears stressed or anxious.
- Appears to be in pain.
- Marked change from usual behavior.

How to Help

- Ask about sensory concerns.
- When meeting individually and in groups, consider the space.
- Try to use windows, lamps, or indirect lighting instead of fluorescent lights.
- Consider a private room instead of a common area with background noise.
- Provide "fidgets" for people to use during downtime (stress balls, fidget spinners, Koosh balls, etc.).

Looking for Additional Information?

This information guide was developed by the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (**ASERT**). For more information, please call ASERT at **877-231-4244** or **info@PAautism.org**.

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