

A Sensory Life

Sensory Processing Difficulties Awareness and Tips Hospital Procedure or Surgery

What may appear as behavior on the surface, is a neurological condition resulting in difficulty with processing of sensory information. My child may display a sympathetic nervous system response (fight or flight) during this visit due to the multi-sensory experience and various forms of unexpected, unfamiliar, and unpredictable sensory input.

Child's name: _____

Type of sensory challenge (circle one or both):

Under-responsive

Over-responsive

A hospital visit can be difficult for typical children, but children with sensory processing challenges are often defensiveness and over-responsive to sensory input and therefore have a lower threshold for pain and other forms of sensory input. Strange sounds, strange smells, new people and new surroundings will likely make this procedure very difficult for my child. **On the other hand**, a child may be UNDER-responsive to sensory stimuli...including pain. The child may have an extremely high tolerance for pain because the brain is under-registering the pain and is under-responsive to the input. In this case, it is extremely important to listen to the parent of the child. As the medical provider, you will need to rely on the parent report in regards to the possible illness or injury. PLEASE NOTE: It is unacceptable to complete an assessment and draw conclusions based on the child's reaction to what may typically trigger a pain response, it is likely inaccurate and a critical medical issue may be missed. I cannot stress enough the importance of relying on the parent report to help determine a treatment plan. The parent knows the child's sensory needs and differences better than anyone else.

Here are some ways in which we can help my child during the procedure....

- Please place a few warm blankets (left folded for the extra weight) on my child as soon as he/she gets in the bed or chair, and leave the blankets there the entire visit. This will provide proprioceptive input, which can be calming and soothing for my child.
- My child may need to use earplugs, nose plugs, or noise cancelling headphones, and/or sunglasses. Please respect this and allow it.
- My child may need to hop, jump, or really get out the wiggles to help self-regulate right before getting in the chair or bed. Please be patient and give them a moment or two.
- My child may not want to interact with you...it may just be best to be silent, please do not take this the wrong way ☺.
- My child may want to use an MP3 player with their favorite music or hold a favorite toy. Please allow this if at all possible.
- Please let my child inspect the surroundings and if they want to, let them touch and smell any new equipment prior to any hands on procedures or even before making them get in the chair or bed.
- If an IV is needed, please allow me to take the time to provide deep pressure touch to my child's arm prior to the IV. Also, please use the smallest size IV possible as well as taking any extra steps to help decrease the pain.
- Encourage my child to take deep breaths throughout the procedure, this can help with self-regulation.

Thank you for taking the time to read this sensory awareness handout, and most of all, thank you for being respectful of my child's sensory needs and differences during the procedure.

