

Sense of movement

(The Vestibular system)

The vestibular system provides us with information regarding head position and movement against gravity.

Our movement receptors are located in our inner ear and send information about our head position and how we are moving. If the brain does not process the movement sensation accurately then we may be described as over responsive or under-responsive to movement sensation and this will affect our behaviour.

If the brain is over responsive, it can become easily overwhelmed by a movement experience causing fear, anxiety and avoidance i.e. hesitates walking downstairs. If under-responsive it may seek out more movement experiences to satisfy the need i.e. moving in their seat.

Signs of over-responsiveness to movement

What you may observe	Possible solutions to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child is fearful of movement• Child dislikes escalators or lifts• Appears fearful when held in the air by parents.• Child does not like playing on playground equipment.• Child may be travel sick.• Dislike head tilted back e.g. hair washing, rough and tumble	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When travelling, encourage the child to look out of the window and hold a toy/object that is easy to fidget with without looking e.g. a squeeze toy.• Give the child options i.e. to use the stairs rather than a lift or escalator.• Encourage participation in the type of movement the child does enjoy and tolerates.• Never force a child to participate in an activity.• If they are not keen to jump they may jump holding your hand• Combine movement activities with opportunities to experience changes in body position (proprioception) – see advice sheet below.

Signs of under-responsiveness or difficulty processing movement information

What you may observe	Possible solutions to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child is always 'on the go more than their peers.• Child appears to take excessive risks e.g. show no fear when jumping from a big height.• Has difficulty sitting still or may be observed to constantly fidget.• Runs rather than walks• The child seeks lots of movement including changes in head position.• Seeks to swing or hang upside down	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide the child with ample opportunities to experience movement e.g. going to the park regularly, swimming, trampolining, soft play etc.• Create a safe environment in which the child can experience movement. If purchasing a garden trampoline ensure it has a safety net• Provide more practise with certain movement related skills such as jumping, swinging, animal walks.• Split the child's day into small sections allowing for frequent movement breaks• 'Row your Boat' singing and rocking while sitting on the floor, Hokey Cokey and other nursery movement actions/songs• Request that school consider the 'fun-fit' program.