

## Signs of a possible over-responsive tactile system

What you may observe	Possible solutions to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child avoids messy play.</li><li>• Avoidance of touch.</li><li>• Dislike of hugs.</li><li>• Child becomes very disorganised, over emotional and/or out of control when brushed past or touched lightly</li><li>• Child prefers to wear long sleeves even though it is a very hot day.</li><li>• Child dislikes the textures of certain clothes or material on the skin e.g. labels, seams.</li><li>• Child dislikes walking barefoot on certain surfaces (grass, sand).</li><li>• A greater than normal resistance to having teeth brushed, hair combed or face washed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not force the child to join in. Offer any new tactile experiences in small amounts at first e.g. place their hand over yours rather than putting their hand in yours until they gain confidence, move towards holding their index finger and wiping afterwards</li><li>• <b>Avoid</b> 'light touch' activities e.g. patting on the head or tickling particularly unexpectedly</li><li>• <b>Avoid</b> touch from behind.</li><li>• Use firm rather than light touch, deep pressure - massage rather than tickling</li><li>• Combine tactile activities with opportunities to experience changes in body position (proprioception) – See advice sheet below</li><li>• Allow space around the child in class.</li><li>• Position the child at the end of a line of children.</li><li>• Encourage the use of hand held fidget toys. These are toys or objects easily played with in the hand. They are quite often squeazy objects. They are often particularly effective in circle time, carpet time and getting to sleep at night. Try attaching or tying a small object to a child's mat for circle time or to be kept in a pocket.</li><li>• Deep pressure squeezing along their hands and arms.</li><li>• Avoid going to places at busier and more crowded times of the day</li><li>• Avoid dressing the child in certain textures of clothing that cause irritation i.e. wool</li><li>• Whilst trying tactile activities always use a calm, quiet and encouraging voice in a calm environment</li><li>• Empathise – what is tolerable for one person is unpleasant for another</li></ul>

### Helping a child with tactile sensitivity

**Be very gentle when introducing challenging activities** - keep activities short and follow them with a favourite activity.

**Don't be tempted to progress too quickly** - Celebrate small achievements which may take a long time to accomplish, let the child work at their own pace.

**Grade, Grade, Grade** - Start with very small amounts of tactile materials to avoid over whelming the child. Start with dry textures, progress to wet and then sticky. Stop immediately if the child starts to gag.

**Respect their limits and work within their tolerance** - They need to trust you and build their confidence with these challenging activities. Let them clean their hands if they ask and encourage them to then carry on.

**Bear in mind the environment** - try and build a quiet, calm environment so their sensory systems are not being bombarded by noise or activity. Consider lighting, noise, smell, textures and space.