Sensory Integration in Children

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Does your child have trouble paying attention in school or have a meltdown at the end of the day from trying too hard to be a “good kid”? Have you ever wondered if this struggle was something other than a behavioral challenge?

As children develop, they may experience differences in their sensory processing, which can make seemingly minor tasks seem difficult and can turn minor problems into big meltdowns. Sensory processing starts in the womb and accelerates throughout childhood. It is the development and integration of sensations that are experienced with one’s own body and from the external environment.

A few examples of poor sensory integration can include:

- **Sight**: Sensitivity to bright lights
- **Sound**: Poor tolerance of loud or unexpected noises, such as a fire alarm
- **Smell**: Hypersensitivity to odors
- **Touch**: Sensitivity to the feel of new clothing, or a dislike of being touched
- **Taste**: Picky eaters
- **Vestibular**: Car sickness, or avoidance of swings or slides
- **Proprioceptive**: Falling or clumsiness

Children who exhibit any of the above symptoms may have sensory processing issues. An Occupational Therapist’s early identification, evaluation, and treatment is critical for improving sensory integration and providing children with the best opportunities for success. Click here to read the full article on our website.
Tips to Prevent Falling
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Many people fall because they lose their balance. The ability to maintain balance results from a complex interaction of four major systems and depends on information received by the brain from the eyes, muscles and joints, and vestibular system. Disruption of just one of these factors can lead to balance problems and a higher risk of falling; however, problems with the vestibular system in the inner ears can be a common cause of falling.

Patients with vestibular issues typically report symptoms of dizziness that can include light headedness, vertigo (the sensation of falling when not moving), feeling faint or actually fainting, or disequilibrium/loss of balance. Physical therapists examine both vestibular and nonvestibular causes of imbalance or dizziness and perform tests and measurements to determine which system is impaired and determine how to correct it.

A Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) specialist provides specific exercises that retrain the brain to recognize and process signals from the vestibular system that can prevent falling.

Another vestibular issue is Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo, which is an involuntary movement of the eyes with the illusion of movement or sensation of spinning. A treatment for this condition is the canalith repositioning maneuver, also referred to as the Epley maneuver. This procedure helps reposition small crystals within the inner ear, which can be done in one to three visits. Since dizziness is abnormal and is not a typical part of aging, it is important to see a healthcare professional with vestibular training to help determine the cause of symptoms and appropriate treatment.

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