Have a concern? Call Child & Family Development to schedule a free phone intake!

Making Sense of Sensory Processing

Balancing and proprioception

The Vestibular System:
- Tells us where our heads and bodies are in relation to the surface of the earth.
- Tells us whether we are moving or standing still and whether objects are moving or motionless in relation to our body.
- Tells us about the direction in which we are moving and how fast we are moving.
- Lays a foundation for visual input.

Without good information coming from the vestibular system, sights and sounds in the environment don’t make sense.

The Visual System:
- Our eyes should work together in a teamed fashion with smooth movements to scan our environment and notice how close or far things are from our body to help us maneuver through space.

The Proprioceptive System:
- Proprioceptive input receptors are in the muscles and joints and give information to the brain about the amount of stretch in each muscle and pressure on each joint.
- This provides an accurate picture of the body’s position in space without the use of vision.
- Proprioception provides feedback for grading muscle movements and for how much force is needed to interact with an object or person in the environment.

Red Flags for Balance Difficulties:
- Child trips/falls/bumps into things often
- Child who is fearful of movement
- Child who seeks out movement
- Child who appears to have good balance while moving, but poor balance when expected to stay still
- Child who has difficulty moving through dynamic environments
- Child who has difficulty walking across different or dynamic surfaces

How Do These Systems Work Together?
- Information from these body systems is processed and combined in order for a person to adapt and react to a changing environment.

Balance

Balance Expectations By Age:
- 3 year old: balance on 1 foot for 3 seconds, use alternating feet when climbing stairs
- 4 year old: hop on 1 foot
- 5 year old: balance on 1 foot for 10 seconds

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Contact an occupational therapist or physical therapist for a standardized assessment of motor and sensory skills. Treatment for balance difficulties can include:

- Sensory Integration
- Core/Postural Strengthening
- Postural Control and Stability Training
- Balance Strategies Training
- Visual-Motor Exercises
- Oculomotor Training
- Therapeutic Listening®

Ever know a child who seems to fall, trip and bump into things more than peers?
- Many skills must be in place to support good balance and proprioception.
- Adequate sensory processing skills, range of motion, and strength are foundational skills required for balance and knowing where you are in space.

Sensory Integration

Core/Postural Strengthening

Postural Control and Stability Training