

Sensory Processing Proprioception

Proprioception refers to an awareness of our body position and movement. Just as our eyes and ears send information to our brain about what we see and hear, our muscles and joints are constantly sending unconscious information to our brain; this is called the proprioceptive system. The proprioceptive system provides the brain with information about the position and movement of our body parts and how much force we need to exert for certain tasks.

Sensory information from this system is created by the contraction and stretching of muscles and by the bending, straightening, pulling and compression of joints. When we are able to process proprioceptive information adequately, our brain knows where all our body parts are and what they are doing without having to look at them. Proprioceptive sensory information is also important for regulating a 'just right' level of attention and arousal.

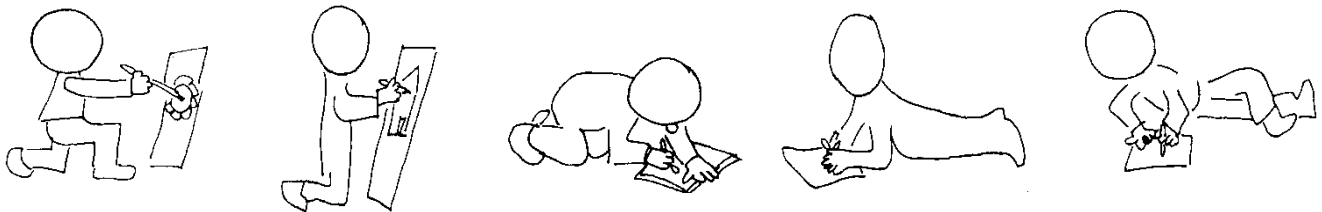
Proprioceptive seeking

A child who is seeking proprioceptive input may:

- Move constantly, rock or fidget
- Chew on, or mouth objects, clothes, hair etc.
- Use too much force for tasks e.g. pressing hard with pencils, slamming doors
- Seek out movement activities that require lots of pushing, pulling, lifting, jumping
- Seek out rough and tumble play
- Bump into or push objects or people
- Appear to uncoordinated or clumsy
- Enjoy tight hugs, arm/back strokes or being wrapped up tight in blankets

Management

- At quiet times when your child is expected to focus, allow them to engage in some proprioceptive input e.g.
 - Use bean bag chairs or disc'o'sit cushions
 - Do writing/drawing tasks and play games in different positions e.g.



- Use a fidget toy to squeeze e.g. stress ball, small toy, playdoh
- Have a quiet corner with pillows, blankets, beanbags that you or the child can stack on top of them.
- Provide lots of deep pressure and heavy work opportunities throughout the day such as:
 - Play rough and tumble games e.g. wrestling in pillows
 - Push/pull games e.g. tug of war, playfully try to push parents over, push against a wall
 - Bouncing/rolling on a large therapy ball
 - Make up obstacle courses e.g. crawling over/under/through objects

- Wheelbarrow walking or animal walks around the house e.g. crab walk, elephant stomps, bear walk, frog jump, bunny hop, duck waddle.
- Jumping on the trampoline
- Sand and water play with buckets etc.
- Playing on playground equipment e.g. monkey bars, climbing webs/towers climbing up the slide



You can also engage in heavy work activities in the home e.g.

- Carrying in the groceries from the car or helping pack them away
- Lifting the heavy, wet washing from the machine in to the dryer or basket
- Carry the basket out to the clothes line and helping peg them on
- Watering the plants with a heavy watering can
- Helping to sweep/vacuum the floor
- Helping wash the car or windows
- Wipe the benches/table clean after dinner
- Eat crunchy and chewy foods and drink thick drinks e.g. milkshakes out of a crazy straw
- In the bath, pour water to/from large containers and squeeze sponges
- Dig in the garden, raking leaves, push a small wheelbarrow





We hope this information is helpful, if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your occupational Therapist on (02) 8966 8500