

# Understanding The Senses

## The Proprioceptive System: Our Body Awareness

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The tactile system is our sense of touch, with receptors throughout the body helping us understand and interact with the world around us. It supports body awareness and helps keep us safe by detecting sensations such as pain, temperature, itch, and potential danger.

## OVERVIEW

# The Proprioception System

The Proprioception System refers to sensations of movement or body position that arise because of our own movement. Proprioception is one of our internal body senses, operating almost entirely below our conscious awareness.

Receptors are based in our muscles, tendons and joints, constantly sending information to the brain about:

- Where our body parts are in space, knowing without needing to look
- How much force our muscles are applying, not too hard, not too soft
- The speed and direction of our movements



## WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE

# Common Signs of Differences with Proprioceptive Processing

### A child tends to engage in more intensely than others

- Strong urge for more intensity of movement such as pushing, pulling, crashing, jumping, hanging
- Uses too much or too little force when holding, pushing, pulling eg patting animals too hard/soft, heavy footed/ handed
- Bump into others, less awareness of personal space.

### A child:

- Unsure where body parts are without looking, difficulty imitating movements
- Needs to look at body parts to guide movement, difficulty with closed eyes, doing up
- Difficulty holding pencil or fork with the 'just right' force or location, such as buttons, zippers
- Difficulty moving their body precisely, getting dressed / undressed, buttons, socks.



## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

# Everyday Activities that Support Proprioceptive Processing

- Whole body movements with resistance, crawling under/over objects, pushing a wagon/trolley/cart with a medium load
- Using hands with intensity: squeezing, kneading, pulling, punching, poking, pounding plasticine, clay or playdoh
- Using mouth with intensity, chewy and crunchy food, sucking thick smoothy through straw
- Animal games: frog jumps, bear walks, lizard commando crawls, kangaroo jumps
- Wall pushes (with feet or hands) / chair push ups
- Carrying box of books, wiping down the windows, packing away / moving furniture

If you think your child may have differences with Proprioceptive Processing, contact your local Occupational Therapist to discuss the process of assessment and intervention.

