

SMELL/TASTE



Smell travels directly to the centre in our brain that controls emotions, memory and learning. Smell is closely linked to our sense of taste. Our brains are wired so that we are able to respond appropriately to tastes and smells. A bad smell for example doesn't go away, our brains just stop noticing it; otherwise we would be totally distracted by it.

Problems you may see

There may be an over-sensitivity or under-sensitivity to smell and taste, although it is less common to be under-sensitive. When a child is over-sensitive, they may avoid some foods, get upset by certain smells or crave smell, become distracted by a smell in the room and gag at smells that others are only mildly affected by.

Strategies to help

- Redirect the child to carry out some proprioceptive activities to distract them and also calm their overly alert sensory systems.
- Allow them to have their favourite scent, or an object that they like the smell of, to block out the 'offensive' smell.





Oral seeking

We all use our mouths to organise ourselves. Think about how many times a day you put your hand to your mouth or put something in your mouth. Many children will be better able to concentrate and have a more appropriate level of arousal if they are allowed to chew or suck. Resistive blowing and sucking are both excellent tools for self-regulation and offer a great amount of proprioception. These activities prepare the brain and nervous system for challenging tasks such as doing homework, or needing to sit for prolonged periods of time and also improve overall mood.

Strategies to help

- ✚ Allowing children to sip water from individual sports bottles throughout the day.
- ✚ Provide a camelback water backpack as this provides weight to the shoulders which is calming, as well as the child having to suck through the tube.
- ✚ Allow the child to have a thick milkshake that they suck through a straw.
- ✚ Depending on age of child, allow chewing gum (with rules in place regarding when they are allowed this and for how long).
- ✚ A range of chewy crunchy snacks such as carrot sticks and cereal bars.
- ✚ Chewy pencil toppers can also be helpful.
- ✚ Provide an oral sensory toy such as chewy tubes or chewellery. Be sure it is readily available at all times (eg attach to clothing).
- ✚ Regular use of mouth toys such as harmonicas and toys that allow sucking or blowing.
- ✚ A bubble mountain is a great activity idea – fill a bowl with water and washing-up liquid and get your child to blow into it through a straw to create lots of bubbles.

