

Symptoms of SPD

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is a “difficulty in the way the brain takes in, organizes, and uses sensory information, causing a person to have problems interacting effectively in the everyday environment. Sensory stimulation may cause difficulty in one’s movement, emotions, attention, relationships, or adaptive responses.”

- The Out-of-Sync Child by Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A.

Symptoms of SPD

SPD has many different varieties (not included here: Sensory Discrimination Disorder and Sensory-Based Motor Disorder) and can manifest in different ways in each child. Here are just a few examples of behaviors a child experiencing SPD may show:

If a child is over-responsive they may:

- Avoid touch/react negatively to certain touch
- Reacts negatively (think fight or flight) to being dirty, certain textures, and certain foods
- Avoid moving or being moved
- Be afraid of falling
- Be stiff and avoid certain playground activities
- Overreact to bright light
- Have poor eye contact
- Cover ears to avoid sounds

If a child is under-responsive they may:

- Not know when they are touched
- Often drop toys and lack drive to play with them
- Not notice or react to being moved
- Be poor at protecting self from falling
- Be able to swing for a long time without getting dizzy
- Become more alert after pushing/pulling heavy things
- Ignore obstacles in path
- Ignore ordinary sounds
- Be able to eat very spicy foods

If a child is sensory-craving they may:

- Feel through toys without purpose
- Chew on things like shirt cuffs
- Feel walls and bump into people
- Move/fidget constantly
- Seek fast/spinning movement
- Get upside-down often
- Crave bear hugs/being squeezed
- Seek highly stimulating screens for long periods of time
- Be attracted to bright, flickering light such as strobe lights
- Seek strong odors
- Love loud noises/noisy spaces

It is important to note that some children experience a combination of sensitivity symptoms.

Remember

SPD is very complex. For an official diagnosis and treatment, the opinion of a professional such as an Occupational Therapist (OT) is needed. These are just a few symptoms of SPD.

Did you know?

SPD often goes **undiagnosed** due to its symptoms being mistaken for other conditions, like ADHD.

Credit to The Out-of-Sync Child by Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A. for its definition of SPD and list of symptoms