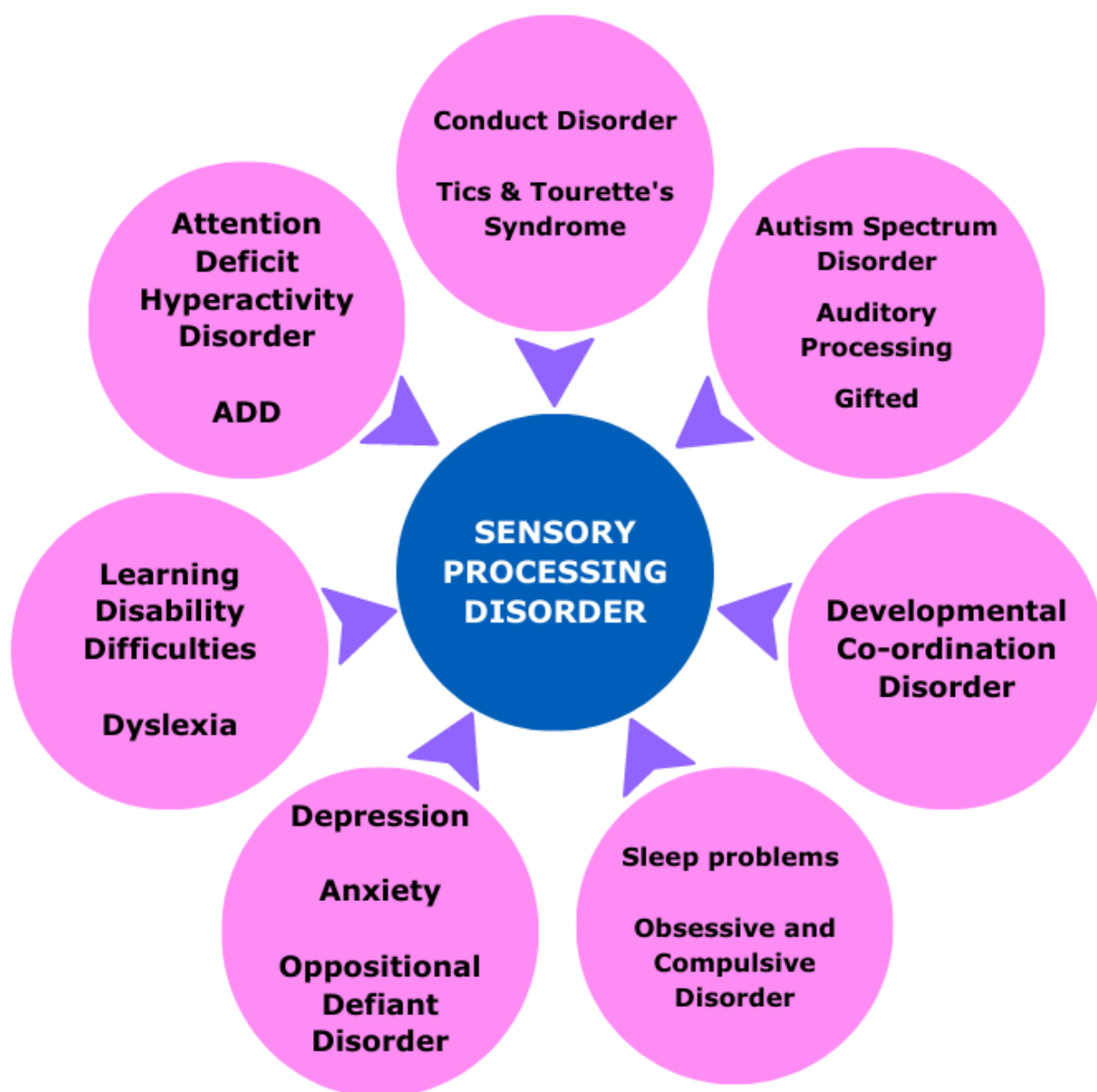


WHAT IS SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER?

Sensory Processing Disorder is a neurological condition in children that can affect the way the brain processes information from the senses. People with Sensory Processing Disorder may be extra sensitive to or not react to sensory input, depending on how they are affected. Five common senses are touch, hearing, taste, smell, and sight.



What are the signs and symptoms of Sensory Processing Disorder?

The symptoms of having sensory processing issues may depend on the way a child processes different sensations.

Children who are easily stimulated may have hypersensitivity. This means they have an increased sensitivity to sensory inputs like light, sound, and touch. These sensations may bother them more, cause them to lose focus in the presence of too much sensory information, or cause them to act out.

Children may also experience hyposensitivity. This means they may have reduced sensitivity to sensory output.

The type of sensitivity someone experiences may largely determine what their symptoms are. For example, children who are hypersensitive may react as though everything is too loud or too bright. These kids may have difficulty being in noisy rooms. They may also have adverse reactions to smells.

Sensory hypersensitivity may cause:

- A low pain threshold
- Appearing clumsy
- Fleeing without regard to safety
- Covering eyes or ears frequently
- Picky food preferences or gagging when eating foods of certain textures
- Resisting hugs or sudden touches
- Feeling that soft touches are too hard
- Difficulty controlling their emotions
- Difficulty focusing attention
- Difficulty adapting responses
- Behaviour problems

Children who are hyposensitive and experience reduced sensitivity crave interaction with the world around them. They may engage more with their surroundings to get more sensory feedback.

In fact, this may make them appear hyperactive, when in reality, they may simply be trying to make their senses more engaged.

Sensory hyposensitivity may cause:

- A high pain threshold
- Bumping into walls
- Touching things
- Putting things into their mouth
- Giving bear hugs
- Crashing into other people or things
- Not regarding personal space
- Rocking and swaying

Children who have sensory issues may have an aversion to things that overstimulate their senses, such as loud environments, bright lights, or intense smells. Or, they may seek out additional stimulation in settings that don't stimulate their senses enough.

Sensory processing is typically divided into eight main types. They can include:

Proprioception. Proprioception is the “internal” sense of awareness you have for your body. It’s what helps you maintain posture and motor control, for example. It also tells you about how you’re moving and occupying space.

Vestibular. This term refers to the inner ear spatial recognition. It’s what keeps you balanced and coordinated.

Interoception. This is the sense of what’s happening in your body. It may be best understood as how you “feel.” This includes whether you feel hot or cold and whether you feel your emotions.

What causes sensory issues in children?

Sensory processing disorder may be related to prenatal or birth complications, which can include:

- premature birth
- low birth weight
- parental stress
- alcohol or drug consumption during pregnancy

Overexposure to certain chemicals and a lack of sensory stimulation in childhood may also be risk factors for developing sensory processing disorder.

Possible abnormal brain activity could change how the brain responds to senses and stimuli.

Conditions or disorders connected to sensory issues can include:

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Sleep disorders
- Developmental delay
- Brain injury

Treatment for Sensory Processing Disorder

Occupational Therapy

An occupational therapist may work with a child's teacher, parent or carer to better support their sensory needs in the classroom and home.