

Transcript



Welcome back to our miniseries – Meeting your child's sensory needs. In this short video we will look at some of the sensory behaviours your child may be displaying when using the toilet and provide strategies for you to try, helping you to meet their needs.



Going to the toilet has a lot of steps and requires a lot of different skills which can be difficult for children. As well as considering bladder and bowel function, and development, it is useful to consider how sensations affect a child's response to using the toilet.

Toileting, like dressing or eating, is an extremely sensory experience! Many children find that bathrooms and toilets are upsetting or frightening. You may find your child dislikes the sounds or smells of the bathroom or the feeling of the toilet seat, toilet paper and making a pee/poo. They may have difficulties in understanding the sensations experienced by their own body such as a full bladder/bowel.

The experience of going to the toilet or the bathroom environment could be providing too much or too little sensory feedback that moves them from the "Just Right" Zone.

Don't expect big changes overnight. It can take several months for sensory strategies to be used effectively. You are likely to need to use the strategies you think work best, for you and your child, consistently for around 3 months before knowing for certain that they work. Be prepared for them not to work each and every time so have a few sensory strategies that can be used in these situations.

Please remember that your child should be supervised at all times when taking part in the activities suggested in this video.

Use a Secret (Lucy Jane Miller 2006)

We introduced "A SECRET" by Lucy Jane Miller in our video "meeting your child's needs".

This is a problem-solving tool for parents, teenagers and even for children themselves to think about the seven elements in sensory and motor challenges and to come up with some ideas of things to change to lead to smoother functioning for the child. "A SECRET" is an acronym for these seven elements: attention, sensation, emotional regulation, culture, relationship, environment and task. A SECRET is not a rigid formula for what to do, but a flexible format helping you to consider each of these important elements in turn.

The sensation element is only one part of "A SECRET". Think about how each of these elements could be influencing your child's behaviour and how or if these could be manipulated to allow your child to use the toilet without distress.

Analysing and understanding the sensory experiences of your child will help to identify the strategies that may help to make toileting a more positive sensory experience. Asking yourself these questions may help you to establish whether your child is receiving too much or possibly too little sensory feedback that may be causing challenges when toileting.

It may take a few attempts before you notice any change. If there is no change, go back and look at the other elements in A SECRET. You may need to try a combination of strategies and elements to help meet your child's needs by reducing/replacing the feedback with a more positive sensory experience.

The first step when considering S for sensation, is to closely observe your child's reactions and ask yourself which sensory system is being over stimulated? Investigate by thinking of one sensory system at a time. We will look at each and give you some questions to ask yourself and practical suggestions for things to try.





We will consider Touch first.

When considering the touch sensory system ask yourself these questions...

- How does the action of wiping, sitting on a toilet seat, or pooping feel for your child?
- Do they seem to enjoy having a full nappy/being soiled or wet?
- Do they like or dislike washing their hands?

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- Do they like to use toilet paper or wipes?
 - Do they remove all of their clothes to go to the toilet?
 - Do they play/get distracted with water, soap, other bathroom products, or their poo?
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 - Is the bathroom a very cold or warm room?
 - Do they find the toilet seat/potty to be very cold, hard or uncomfortable?



Strategies

- If your child finds the toilet seat uncomfortable, experiment with alternative seat shapes or covers that will offer a different feeling. A padded seat may feel warmer and softer.
- Consider the texture of the toilet paper or wipes, a child may prefer the texture of softer, moist wipes to dry toilet paper and vice versa. Wet wipes may also assist a child with wiping.
- Provide toys and fidgets to your child on the toilet to offer extra tactile or auditory input if necessary and avoid them seeking it elsewhere in the bathroom.
- Use a nappy liner, folded kitchen paper or pants worn inside the nappy to increase your child's awareness of wetness.
- Choose appropriate, loose-fitting clothes with larger buttons, Velcro fastenings and elastic waistbands to simplify the task and avoid frustration.
- Think about how you can make the room a comfortable temperature – do they like to be warm and cosy or would they prefer a cooler room?
- For the sensory seeker, who seeks out water, soap or touches everything, increase opportunities for tactile or messy play at other times in their day.



Their smell sensory system may be impacting on their level of alertness.
Things to consider relating to smell –

- Do they gag, choke or hold their nose at smells such as their poo?
- Is there very strong/distinct fragrances in the bathroom e.g., candles, diffusers, cleaning products, potpourri?



What to try –

- For children who become overstimulated by bathroom smells, use non-perfumed toiletries and cleaning products and odour neutralisers.
- Encourage your child to bring something they like to smell (blanket, toy) to distract them from other smells in the bathroom.
- For children seeking smell input, try using air fresheners, diffusers etc to distract them from other smells in the bathroom and build in more experiences for smell in their daytime routines.



For vision think about –

- What colour is the bathroom and flooring, is it very bright, reflective or patterned?
- What is the lighting like, is it very bright, are there any flickering lights?

Things you can change or adapt –

- Try covering tiled/patterned flooring with a non-slip mat.
- Use calming colours, dim lights/low wattage bulbs, and put excess visual input (toiletries/equipment) out of sight to help children distressed by visual input.
- Bright lights, sensory lights, posters, cartoons and charts may help children seeking visual input in the bathroom.



Thinking about noise –

- How do they feel about typical bathroom noises such as flushing, splashing water, extractor fans or public hand dryers?
- Do they avoid flushing the toileting or flush repetitively?
- Is there an echo in the bathroom?



Things that might help –

- Put a small amount of toilet paper in the toilet before your child uses it to reduce the noise and risk of splashes.
- Use ear defenders, earplugs or headphones for children who become overstimulated by bathroom noises such as flushing.

- Record the sound of the flush and use it to gradually desensitise them.
- Encourage your child to stand at a safe distance while you press the flusher and encourage them to gradually step closer to the flusher every time to build their confidence and encourage them to flush.
- For children who enjoy repetitively flushing, include a visual cue for 1 flush followed by an activity they enjoy.

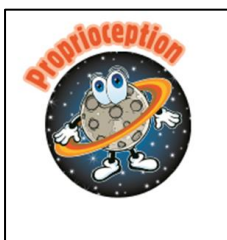


Vestibular sense –

- Do they feel afraid of falling in and not feel steady?
- Do they have difficulty sitting still because they want to be moving?
- Do they feel like they are not balanced and feel like they're going to fall off the side?
- Are they disoriented with reaching around self to wipe, leaning over to pull down or up pants/trousers?
- Do they feel like toilet seat is too high off the ground?

You can

- Use a toilet seat cushion with handles if your child is afraid to sit on the toilet.
- Support their feet with a stool so their knees are bent and feet firmly planted on stool.
- Try a toddler toilet that's close to the ground.

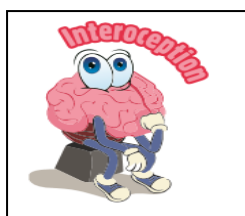


Let's think about Proprioception –

- For boys, does he have difficulty estimating where to stand and aim to pee into the toilet bowl?
- Do they move around on the toilet?
- Do they find positioning themselves on the toilet difficult?
- Do they find coordinating the steps to toileting difficult?
- Do they struggle to reach round to wipe themselves?

Things to try –

- Apply feet mark stickers or tape to the floor to show your child where their feet should go to help correct positioning.
- Create a visual schedule for the steps of toileting to put in the bathroom (or grab this one on Amazon here).
- Teach your child to stand and wipe, which may be easier for them to coordinate.
- Practice labelling body parts, including private parts for more accurate wiping.
- Practice clothing and fastener management frequently so your child knows how to pull down and up pants when it's time to use the toilet.



Interoception

- Do they notice if they have an accident and soil themselves?
- Do they notice they need in enough time to get to the toilet?

You could –

- Use a nappy liner, folded kitchen paper or pants worn inside the nappy to increase your child's awareness of wetness.
- Use visual reminders, timers or phone alarms to create a schedule/routine to go to the toilet, this can help children finding it difficult to recognise the need to go to the toilet.

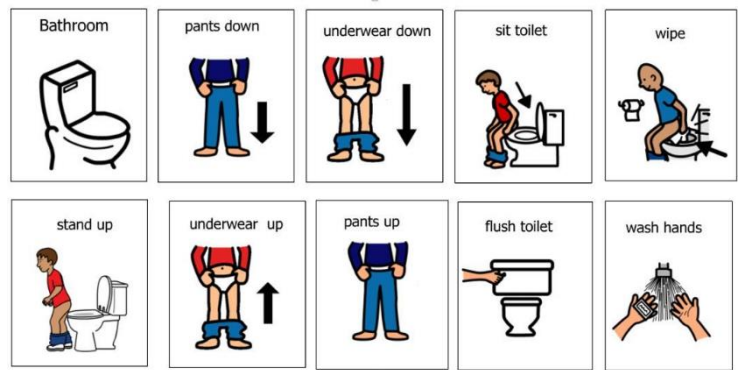


Other strategies to try

Some other more general strategies you could try relating to toileting –

- Choose appropriate, loose-fitting clothes with larger buttons, Velcro fastenings and elastic waistbands to simplify the task and avoid frustration.
- Let your child see you use the toilet to model the process and behaviours.

- Use visual aids, social stories, children's books about toileting (I want my potty, potty superhero, dino potty) to increase your child's understanding of task.
- Be encouraging and offer lots of praise and rewards like stickers.
- Be patient, allow your child time to try new strategies and to succeed without rushing them as it may take time.



Make it fun!

Try to include games and activities to assist your child with activities that will provide distraction, increase their body awareness and help them to learn how to sequence toileting. Try to include some of these when exploring their sensory likes and dislikes. By thinking of your child's sensory systems and observing how they react to small changes you can gain a better understanding of why they may be feeling, thinking or behaving differently to the sensory feedback. Through consistently implementing the strategies they respond well to; you will help them to find a more positive sensory experience whilst meeting their sensory needs.



- Sing songs (let it go, potty song – Coco melon) on the toilet/potty to make the experience more pleasant for your child.
- Read books while on the potty or toilet.
- Allow your child to decorate the potty or toilet with stickers.
- Place cheerios or a target sticker in the toilet to act as targets and encourage your child to aim for the cheerios or sticker.
- Use dolls or teddies to practice sequence of going to the toilet and have your child teach their dolls/teddies how to use the toilet.
- Tie a ribbon around their waist and attach more ribbons/balloons to the back of their child and encourage them to reach for these backwards through their legs to help with their body awareness and the action of wiping behind. Time and race them to make it more fun!



And remember ...

Everyone has different sensory responses to stimuli. By thinking of your child's sensory systems and observing how they react to small changes, you can gain a better understanding why your child may be feeling, thinking or behaving differently to sensory feedback.

There will likely be times when your strategy doesn't work so have a toolbox full of strategies to dip into as needed.

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Give time for strategies to work. Through consistently implementing the strategies they respond well to; you will help them to find a more positive sensory experience and meet their sensory needs.

We have hopefully suggested some strategies throughout this video you may wish to try.

We have a pyramid problem solving tool on our website that you can download which may be useful for you. This problem-solving tool helps us to think about the behaviour and the possible underlying sensory causes. By putting the problem at the very top of the triangle then starting to think about each of the sensory systems below, you may be able to identify if there is a sensory reason for the problem. At the bottom of the pyramid, you list the strategies you wish to try.

In this example for toothbrushing, using the problem of tantrums when it's time to brush teeth, we have given examples of the sensory systems that might be receiving too much feedback and strategies you can use to change that, such as trying alternative toothpaste and a vibrating toothbrush.

Thank you for watching this video. We hope you have discovered some strategies that you may like to try with your child.

Once you have tried our suggestions consistently for a while and feel you want to talk through strategies or need support to help implement these, please contact us using our enquiry line or enquiry email inbox.



How To Contact Us...

Prior to contacting the service, we suggest you explore our resources online and on Facebook;

Advice and support can be sought from the service by contacting the team directly using our Enquiry Line or via our Enquiry Email Inbox.

 www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/cypot

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 Paediatric.OTEnquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk

We will aim to contact you within 5 working days to discuss your enquiry