



FAQ about Sensory Diets: Are Sensory Diets Evidence-Based?

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A sensory diet is an individualized plan that is designed to meet sensory needs in order to function optimally. This means maintaining attention and arousal for daily tasks and having adaptive responses, both emotionally and physically. Each individual has different sensory needs. Implementing a sensory diet is a sensory strategy often used in schools and homes to allow individuals to improve their processing and to improve interactions within daily tasks.

When creating a sensory diet, occupational therapists (OTs) should be a part of the process. OTs are trained to be able to assess and treat sensory processing and integration differences. OTs will assess individual systems and processing using evaluation tools, observations, and interviews. Implementing a sensory diet requires the preparation of activities and consistent monitoring and data collection to adjust for responses. Remember that the goal is for an individual to respond adaptively, which means being able to successfully meet the demands of tasks and activities within the current setting or environment.

FAQ #7: Are sensory diets evidence-based?

A: Sensory diets, strategies, and interventions are not currently listed as evidence-based practices supported by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders. To be considered an evidence-based practice for individuals with ASD, efficacy must be established through peer-reviewed research that meets specific criteria. At this point, sensory interventions have not been included on this list. However, it should be noted that sensory strategies are a part of other evidence-based practices listed, such as exercise, reinforcement, and self-management.

Meeting sensory needs is foundational to both the Ziggurat Model and is also included as one of the four functions of behavior in ABA Theory. Understanding the role that sensory input and sensory integration plays in the body is typically the role of a trained occupational therapist. For sensory research articles and evidence related to specific sensory strategies, fields such as neuroscience and occupational therapy offer information and insights. For example, the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* has a list of research articles available for sensory interventions, and the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) has a list of articles on sensory processing and sensory integration at

<http://www.aota.org/Practice/Children-Youth/Evidence-based.aspx#spsi>.

AOTA has also developed a Series of Practice Guidelines, including guidelines for sensory that are available at <http://myaota.aota.org/>.

Continued research in sensory strategies by those trained in sensory and sensory integration is warranted. Functional outcomes of improved sensory processing should be the focus of those who are working to improve the lives of those with sensory differences.

For more strategies and ideas, check out [IRCA sensory articles online](#) or visit us at <http://www.pinterest.com/IRCAIU/>.