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 What do I put in the IEP?**

**A:** Sensory diet activities can be listed in the accommodations or strategies section of an Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP). Include practical activities, such as work accommodations, breaks, or use of fidgets. Also include any specific strategies that may not typically be allowed, such as chewing gum or use of oral motor substitutes during testing and activities. Specific information regarding sensory breaks and strategies help parents, teachers, and staff understand what is recommended.

When including sensory diets or sensory strategies in goals, make sure to write goals with a measurable and a functional outcome. Sensory processing or sensory diets are methods used to allow individuals to function optimally in their daily lives. By incorporating the chosen sensory strategies and diet activities, individuals are able to produce functional outcomes that can be measured, in a practical way, by the annual goal. Sensory strategies can be written into many academic, motor, self-care, and socialization goals.

Also, consider the impact of sensory strategies on arousal and attention when developing goals for participation in the classroom environment. Keep in mind that the goal should be written for a measurable outcome and not as a measure of the consistency of implementation of a chosen sensory strategy.

For more strategies and ideas, check out IRCA sensory articles online or visit us at http://www.pinterest.com/IRCAIU/.