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 #5: What do I purchase?
A: Knowing what to prioritize in your budget when purchasing sensory equipment is a difficult decision for therapists and teachers alike. It is important to consider the type of sensory programming that you will be implementing. Very specific protocols for therapists trained in SI exist and should be followed, if a pure SI approach is warranted. For those implementing sensory strategies and sensory diets, including equipment and supplies that will meet the needs of each system is recommended. Choose equipment based on location of use, such as a sensory room or within a classroom environment. Some pre-made sensory programs often use specific equipment and activities so those should be reviewed before purchasing equipment. Consider incorporating several activity choices for each system, such as:

**Vestibular/Movement:** a variety of swings, rockers, bouncers/jumpers, discs, zip lines, and/or balance beams (also consider use of PE and playground equipment)

**Proprioception/Heavy Work:** weighted vests/blankets/pads, scooter boards, therapy balls, body sox/Lycra, bean bag chairs, and therapy putty (also consider use of PE and playground equipment)

**Oral:** vibrating toothbrushes or oral motor toys, whistles or musical instruments, sweet/sour/spicy or crunchy/chewy foods, gum, straws with thick drinks, and bubbles

**Auditory/Sound:** sound effects or relaxation cd’s/audio files, classical music, nature sounds, metronomes, headphones

**Tactile/Touch:** clays and dough, gak, putty, foam, textured objects, koosh balls, paints

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