

OLFACTORY AND ORAL SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR TEENS

Signs of Being Under-Responsive to Oral and Olfactory Input

Teens who are under-responsive to these inputs may seek them out in more intensity or they may appear to have a decreased awareness regarding oral and smell inputs.

- Seeks out intense flavors and/or temperatures
- Doesn't notice when foods seem to be too hot or cold;
- May burn self without realizing
- Complains of foods tasting bland, often adds extra flavoring
- Eats very fast; doesn't seem to consistently chew food
- Chews on non-edibles (erasers, pen tops, shirt collars, etc.)
- Constantly wants gum or candy
- Excessive "snacker"
- Doesn't seem to notice smells that others do (both bad and good)

Olfactory and Oral Sensory Strategies for Teens Who are Under-responsive to Input (Oral Sensory Seekers)

- Incorporate extreme flavors/temperatures in meals and snacks (spicy, sour, cold)
- Have extra oral input on hand such as gum, hard candy, beef jerky, and water bottles
- Look into teen chewy necklaces. Most appear like typical teen jewelry; Etsy sells a variety of chewy and scented necklaces
- Try vibrating toothbrushes and/or intense mouthwashes
- Have spices/hot sauces available at meals
- Try sour candy before an exam or focused time
- Pack healthy snacks with proteins and complex carbs to keep energy levels consistent
- Make sure smoke detectors in house are all working
- Avoid extremely hot foods

OLFACTORY AND ORAL SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR TEENS

Signs of Being Over-responsive to Oral Sensory and Olfactory Input

Teens that are over-sensitive to oral and olfactory input are overwhelmed by this type of sensory information and it is not getting filtered appropriately by their nervous systems. Too much of this input can send them into a "fight/flight/fright" response which may look like avoidance, aggression or even being scared of a new food.

- Picky eater
- Avoids certain textures and/or temperatures
- Doesn't like spicy, sweet or avoids certain tastes
- Over-sensitive to dental work
- Doesn't like to brush teeth and/or floss
- Easily bothered by smells
- Gags easily

Olfactory and Oral Sensory Strategies for Teens Who are Hypersensitive to Input

- Try chewy/crunchy foods as these textures tend to be more organizing and provide calming proprioceptive input
- Be aware of temperature and taste and avoid extremes
- Introduce new foods/smells gradually
- Try a vibrating toothbrush, sometimes the vibration is easier to tolerate than the lighter touch of a typical toothbrush
- Use essential oils to calm and relax (lavender and cedarwood are two that can be calming)
- Use unscented products/detergents
- Incorporate calming music into mealtimes and decrease other extraneous distractions