

Cotlands



Birth to two – Sensory Development Tips

What is sensory development?

This is when the child's senses are stimulated which prompts the neural pathways in the brain to develop, laying the foundation for life-long learning.

Sensory development is crucial for the holistic development of the child. For optimal brain development, the brain needs both the senses and muscles.

So, how does this work?

An input is received through the senses, namely

sense of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight which activates the brain and then stimulates the muscles to respond so baby can move and explore their environment.

Did you know?

Sensory play provides the opportunity for the senses to be stimulated and the muscles to develop while the child discovers and explores new sensations through play.

Sensory development activities

The quality of your baby's learning experience is exponentially enhanced when one or more of the senses are stimulated:

Sense of touch

- Touching is one of the best ways to stimulate your baby. It provides contact, reassurance, relaxation and comfort.
- Babies like firm and gentle stroking.
- Touching a variety of textures will spark neural development in your baby's brain
 - Wash your hands before touching your baby.
 - Stroke your baby from head to toe with a different fabric or household items (cotton ball, tooth brush, sponge, etc.).
 - Gently massage your baby.
 - Trickle water over your baby during bath time.
 - Play pat-a-cake.
 - Gently exercise your baby's arms and legs, moving them smoothly and slowly.





Sensory development activities

Sense of smell and taste

- The sense of smell is well developed in babies; they can recognise the smell of the mother.
- Let your baby smell different things from around the home, so that they become familiar with their environment.
- Take them for walks and let them smell flowers.
- From 6 months of age, when they start eating solids, introduce them to different fruits and vegetables — one at a time in case of allergies. Check with your doctor to see if you can feed your baby new kinds of foods.



Sense of hearing

- A newborn's most highly developed sense is hearing.
- Babies can hear and remember familiar sounds months before they're born.
- One of the easiest ways to calm a newborn is to hold him next to his mother's chest so he can hear her heart.
- Infants seem to prefer soft and high-pitched sounds, especially a female's voice.
- As your baby grows, you will be able to interact more and more.
- You can:
 - Talk to your baby.
 - Play musical toys or radios.
 - Shake a rattle or ring a bell from different areas of the crib.
 - Attach bells to your baby's booties.
 - Sing to your baby.
 - Expose your baby to different sounds.
 - Read a story to your baby.
- Warning: Don't put earphones on your baby.





Sensory development activities

Sense of sight

- Babies begin to tell the difference between light and dark before they are born.
- At birth, an infant can clearly see an object 25-30cm from his or her face.
- For the first three months, babies enjoy contrasting colours and patterns, especially black and white.
- Older infants like bright, bold colours — red, blue, green and yellow.
 - Give your baby toys with contrasting patterns and colours, or hang the toys in the crib.
 - Use mobiles, crib mirrors or crib gyms.
 - Place your face 25-30 cm from your baby.
 - Always hold and look at your baby while feeding him or her.
 - Play peek-a-boo.
 - Place objects so your baby can see and reach for them.
 - Show your baby pictures from a storybook as you read.
- Hang pictures of family members on the crib.



Sense of movement (vestibular)

It's important for baby to experience movement. You can stimulate this sense through all forms of play which encourage babies to use and exercise their arms, legs and other muscles.

- Play encourages baby to sit, crawl, stand, walk, run, climb, reach and bend.
- Physical activities encourage babies to move about and use their bodies.
- Baby begins to understand how his body moves and functions.
- He explores and discovers his environment.
- Children who are not yet mobile will need special encouragement to play actively.
 - Hold baby in an upright position for a short while supporting his or her neck if necessary.
 - Hold baby and dance around with him or her.
 - Massage baby.
 - Let baby lie on his or her tummy.
 - Rock baby – side to side, gently.
 - Hold and cuddle baby.
 - Push baby in a pram.
 - Encourage baby to roll from his or her back and onto their side.
 - Place baby onto a large ball and, while holding him or her securely on the ball, roll the baby backwards and forwards and then sideways, slowly.
- Make baby aware of his or her feet. Play with their feet, bring their feet to their hands so that they can grasp their feet.

