**VESTIBULAR SENSORY ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS**

***Vestibular***strategies involve movement for regulation. As the head changes positions, and the body moves, input is regulated in the inner ear. Vestibular input is the building block of all of the other systems.

Check out the [**vestibular activities**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/vestibular-activities/) we have here on the site. While these are movement-based play activities for kids, you can see how the different motions impact a state of calmness or alertness.

**These vestibular sensory activities for adults work in the same way:**

* yoga
* slow rocking in a chair
* spinning in an office chair
* sitting on a therapy ball
* standing at a desk
* windmill arm exercises
* stretch breaks
* brisk walks
* dancing

**PROPRIOCEPTION SENSORY ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS**

***Proprioceptive***strategies involve deep pressure, or heavy work for regulation, as the muscles, tendons, and joints are activated with increased intensity. Deep pressure often has a calming or organizing effect.

Here on the site we have many [**proprioception activities**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/proprioception-sensory-activities/) for kids, but the main concept is the same. Offering heavy work through the joints offers calming regulatory input.

**Some proprioceptive sensory tools for adults include:**

* push-ups in any form – floor, chair, wall, or desk
* yoga poses
* mindfulness apps
* Using some of the same [**breathing exercises**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/breathing-exercises-for-kids/) that we use with kids
* squeezing arms and legs
* [**weighted lap pad or weighted blanket**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/weighted-vests-and-compression-garments/)
* [**heavy work-**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/heavy-work-activities/) for adults this might be mowing the lawn, gardening, running, etc.
* self-hugging or massage
* resistance band exercises
* therapy putty exercises

**TACTILE SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS**

***Tactile***strategies involve [**sensory touch**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/sensory-touch/) stimulation for self-regulation, but it also involves [**tactile defensiveness**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/mess-free-indoor-snow-sensory-play/) too. While some adults crave this input, others respond negatively to touch. For this reason, a personalized sensory diet for adults is important.

Some tactile strategies for adults include:

* [**Sensory brushing protocol**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/sensory-brushing/) (trained by qualified individual), bean bag tapping up and down the extremities
* calm strips, sequin items, textured clothing, or some other form of texture
* use of a stress ball
* Fidget toys…go ahead and pick one up. You’ll see why the kids love them!
* applying lotion to arms and legs
* small massager to hands, arms, and legs
* fidget tools or [**DIY fidget toys**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/diy-fidget-toys/), such as squeeze balls, pop its, clickety gadgets, etc. Amazon (affiliate link:) has an entire [**fidget toy category for adults**](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=adult+fidget+toys&crid=VKNRNPDJ9OK3&sprefix=adult+fidget+toy%2Caps%2C102&linkCode=ll2&tag=sugaun-20&linkId=2ec701ad1b5511acea5f8681bc496f8f&language=en_US&ref_=as_li_ss_tl)!
* seeking the amount of personal space needed when near others. More or less may be needed depending on the needs of the individual

**OLFACTORY SENSORY STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS**

***Olfactory***strategies involve using the sense of smell or input to the nose to either provide calm or alertness for self-regulation. Some adults have a scent sensitivity that is related to candles, certain oils (even cooking oils), fabric softeners, or allergens. An **air freshener allergy** is especially common when candles, room freshener sprays, or plug in scents are supposed to be calming and soothing, they are actually disorganizing for your sensory system.

Again, each person has their own individual needs and preferences, so a customized diet is helpful. Read about the [**olfactory sense**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/olfactory-sense-scented-sensory-play/) here.

Consider essential oils and lotions with the following scents:

* lavender, vanilla, orange, and chamomile to reduce tension or stress and/or promote relaxation
* citrus, peppermint, cinnamon, and lemon to promote increased alertness and/or concentration
* coffee beans for a neutral scent to balance other smells
* try deep breathing strategies (inhale gently and deeply through the nose and exhale gently and slowly through the nose, repeat as often as needed)

**VISUAL STRATEGIES FOR ADULTS**

***Visual***strategies involve visual input for self-regulation.

* changing lighting: a lamp light for reducing visual input vs. overhead fluorescent light for increased visual stimulation
* dimmer switch for overhead lighting, to reduce or increase light
* reduce or eliminate visual clutter in the setting in all planes, for increased calm
* paint calming colours on walls for such as blue or neutral colours, and for increased alertness, think orange or red
* use patterned rugs or curtains for alertness, or more neutral and solid colours for calming
* work in an open space with views of action within the space for alertness, or go for a partition or desk divider to eliminate visual distractions, for a more calm and focused setting
* take eye rest breaks when exposed to excessive amounts of computer light
* consider a computer glare screen, blue blocking glasses, or coloured screen filters to block computer lighting, and decrease visual input

**AUDITORY SENSORY IDEAS FOR ADULTS**

***Auditory*** strategies can reduce or eliminate noise for improved self-regulation in adults. Alternatively, they can add or increase the noise for a sensory seeker.

* music and the type of music, can be alerting or calming
* white noise can help provide a constant sound, making it predictable, or be bothersome to more sensitive people
* earbuds, or ear plugs, can help block out some noise
* noise-cancelling headphones help block out as much noise as possible
* running water from a fountain or nature sounds can feel calming
* running fan or another humming-type device
* foam earplugs to muffle sound without completely blocking it out

**GUSTATORY STRATEGIES FOR ADULT SELF-REGULATION**

***Gustatory*** strategies can help to alert or calm individuals, simply by the sensory input provided either through the texture or flavour of the food, or the mouth movement needed to consume it. When considering foods, try to go for healthy options when possible.

To increase alertness, try crunchy, salty, sweet, sour, spicy, hard to chew, or cold foods and/or drinks. To calm and organize, consider smooth, warm, and softly flavored foods, and/or drinks, as these tend to be more soothing.

Likewise, different foods and drinks can be calming. Sucking a thick drink through a straw can serve to provide proprioceptive input, being calming or alerting. Iced fluids are more alerting. Warm or hot liquids are generally more calming.

**Consider these for increasing levels of alertness:**

* Crunchy: apple slices, carrot sticks, pretzels, nuts, tortilla chips, graham crackers, or rice cakes
* Sour: lemon flavor, cranberries, sour candy, green apples, lemonade, and tart cherries
* Sweet: yogurt, juices, frozen fruit juice pops, smoothies, grapes, oranges, and strawberries
* Spicy: chips and salsa, cinnamon flavor, peppers, and pretzels with spicy mustard
* Salty: baked potato chips, salty nuts, crackers, popcorn, and pickles
* Chewy: bubble gum, gummy bears, dried fruit, jerky, fruit leather, bagels, or granola bars
* Sucking: sucking a smoothie through a straw or sucking another warmer liquid through a water bottle nozzle
* Cold: Iced water, ice cream, crushed ice, frozen berries, or frozen sherbet

**Consider these for increasing calm:**

* Soft and/or softly flavored: cottage cheese, peanut butter, avocado, pudding, oatmeal, freshly baked cookies, or applesauce
* Warm: Hot tea, warm cocoa, or soup

**INTEROCEPTION STRATEGIES FOR AN ADULT SENSORY DIET**

[**Interoception**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/what-you-need-to-know-about-interoception/) strategies involve understanding and feeling what is going on inside of the body.  Understanding how the body feels and how it reacts to certain sensory strategies can help to identify what is alerting and calming to the individual. Consider:

* Deep breathing
* Mindfulness activities
* Yoga
* Temperature control
* Heavy work and alerting activities
* Understanding of feelings and emotions

Note: Many of the sensory strategies listed here can be scheduled throughout the adult day, or within the moment of need. If seeking further sensory strategies that might help in the pursuit of sensory diet tools, take a look at the following sensory diet examples

**SENSORY DIET EXAMPLE FOR ADULTS**

When it comes to creating a sensory diet for the adult with sensory needs, there are aspects of sensory processing to be considered, in order to integrate sensory diet activities into the day to day functional activities. Essentially, it is important to add movement and sensory options during activities like tedious tasks, waiting periods, or times when self-regulation is essential to the task at hand. Adding the sensory diet strategies correctly into tasks supports needs. The [**Sensory Lifestyle Handbook**](https://www.theottoolbox.com/?s=the+sensory+lifestyle+handbook&lang=en) is a great resource to get your started. Can you get up and walk around while on the phone making an appointment? Can you take a minute to stretch and breathe deeply during traffic?

**Here are examples of sensory diet for adults**

* Wake up, stretch at the side of the bed.
* Start the day: yoga, exercise, cool drink of water with lemon
* Next: bathroom/hot shower, vigorous towel to dry off, compression clothing
* Breakfast: steamy coffee, warm milk, soothing foods
* Transport to work or school: walk or ride to day’s events while listening to calming or alerting music, reading, journaling, listening to podcasts, etc.
* Movement breaks during the day: use fidgets, get up and move throughout the day, eat a snack, chew gum, schedule standing breaks during the day, use a standing desk, consistent water drinking, listen to alerting music while working, deep breathing, mindfulness apps, silence notifications, use ear pods while working, etc.
* Afternoon/Evening: go for a walk, read a book, drink tea, grocery shop or complete other tasks while listening to music, call a friend or loved one, listen to audiobooks, calm down yoga, or stretching at night
* Prepare for next day: write out schedule or to-do lists, doodle, journal, mindfulness strategies, read, watch movies or television (electronics are visually alerting and should be limited close to bedtime)
* Sleep: Use heavy blanket or weighted blanket, heavy pillows, cool room with fan, noise machine, ear plugs, deep breathing before bed, gratitude journal, camomile tea before bed

An adult sensory diet is heavily dependent on the lifestyle of the individual, sensory preferences, day to day tasks, and personal preferences. Using these suggestions, a sensory diet can be integrated right into the tasks that need to be accomplished each day.

**THE TAKEAWAY TO CREATING ADULT SENSORY DIETS**

An adult sensory diet is all about discovering what works for an individual, as each person’s needs are unique, and may change over time. It is important the adult get to know themselves and what they need, before making a plan (the sensory diet) to feed their body’s needs, making it simple nutrition for the brain and the body.

https://www.theottoolbox.com/sensory-diets-for-adults/