

FACT SHEET

Tolerating Touch

Some children with dual sensory impairments may not like to be touched with certain textures or on certain parts of their bodies. This is called “tactile defensiveness”. This sensitivity frequently involves the hands and/or face. It is important to assist the child in tolerating touch and textures for the purposes of eating a variety of foods, exploring the environment, and for general learning. There are several ways to encourage the child to explore new textures. This process must be approached gradually, in a step-by-step fashion.

1. Begin with textures that are dry, moving to moist, to wet, and eventually to sticky textures. Present the textures to parts of the body, which are not very sensitive (e.g., bony areas, areas not covered by hair, such as elbows, shoulders, and knees). These areas of the body may tolerate the textures first. Present the texture to the back of the hands before the palms.
2. Make the activities part of a fun time. You can do this at bathtime where the texture can be washed off quickly. The child may try to wipe the texture off himself, thereby getting a little on his hands. This will help him get used to the texture.
3. See Fact Sheets on Encouraging Exploration and Developing Independence. The earlier you begin this process, the more confident the child will be in accepting and exploring the environment.

Adapted from Sternberg-White, S., Chen, D., Watts, J., 1992
Developing Social-Emotional Skills, INSITE, Utah State University, Logan, Utah

**The Project for New Mexico
Children & Youth Who Are
Deafblind**



The Center for Development & Disability
2300 Menaul NE
Albuquerque, NM 87107
(505) 272-0321
toll free (877) 614-4051

Fact sheets from the Project for NM Children & Youth Who Are Deafblind are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with dual sensory impairments. The information applies to students 0 – 21 years of age. The purpose of the fact sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through individualized technical assistance. The fact sheet is a starting point for further information. Information for this Fact Sheet kindly supplied by California Deaf-Blind Services and the Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project.