

Sensory Summer Activities

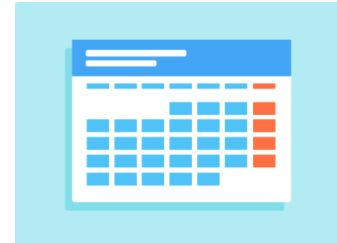


1) Keep some Structure

While having a relaxing and stress free time during your holidays it's still good to keep some structure around meal and bed times, and keep your child's usual routine like getting dressed and cleaning the teeth.

A visual plan or calendar can help your child to keep an overview of all the events that will happen each week. Encourage your child to tick off the days.

This supports planning skills and helps to make events foreseeable, as sensory kids often need predictability.



2) Sand Play

For children who seek out tactile information, **sand play is a great way of stimulating our touch system**. Provide lots of unstructured play on beaches, or find some indoor options using **moon sand** or **kinetic sand** (which has a stickier texture) on big sand trays at home. Try to hide treasures in the sand, make mud pies, write your name, or build a big sand castle.

Let the child **wear water shoes** on hot sand or when they are bothered by the sand between the toes. Be aware that some children might not tolerate the texture of the sand and dislike the stickiness on hands and feet. These children might benefit more from other textures like dried bean baths, play with Model Magic (which is non-sticky) or water play.



3) Make Ice Lollies with Your Child

Try simple recipes with fruit puree! This is lots of fun and a refreshing alternative to ice cream. Puree fruit or use whole fruit pieces, fill it in ice lolly moulds and push in sticks.

Freeze it overnight and enjoy on the next day. Let your child create their own favourite recipe.





4) Water Station

Children of all ages love to play with water. Provide a station in the garden or park where they can have lots of buckets and empty bottles, and a big container full of water, or even a paddling pool which helps to keep cool on hot days. Use plastic fish, marbles, and other items your child wants to play with.

-Create a **summer sensory bin** for outside in a big container and use colourful goo (e.g. **Gelli Baff**) and treasures you can hide. If you keep the Gelli Baff in the fridge it stays cool and refreshing!

-Provide **water colour experiments** with paint pipettes which strengthen your child's fine motor grip, use non-toxic colours/food colouring.

-**Water pumps/cannons** (see picture) are great activities for coordinating both hands smoothly (bilateral coordination).

-Have some paint brushes and paint rollers in the garden or in the park and big containers with water. You can encourage your child to 'paint' on some walls or fences and make water patterns.

-Creating things out of **Play Mais** and water might be a nice outdoor play activity too and supports your child's tactile processing skills and fine motor skills, particularly the pincer grip which is needed for handwriting.

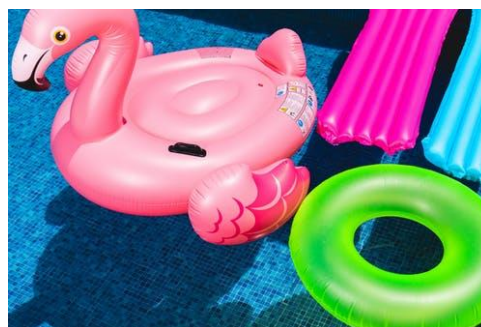


5) Pool and Water activities

Inflatable pool lilos:

Getting onto and staying on blow up pool toys like lilos challenge muscular strength, core stability and balance. If the child is stable on a lilo you can increase the challenge by playing throw and catch, or shooting at targets while keeping your balance on the lilo.

If the child is very stable you can do lilo wrestling: Two people sit on a lilo each and place the palms of their hands together, and have to try to push each other off.





6) More fun Pool Games

Ping Pong Game:

Get a bag of ping pong balls and toss them all in the pool. The child can jump in to collect them.

Beach Ball Race:

Race from one side of the pool to the other with a beach ball. Every person gets a beach ball and pushes it to the other side. Hands must continue to touch/push the ball, throwing is not allowed. You can also make this a collaborative game and help your child to get the ball to the other end.



7) Encourage Outdoor Play

Provide lots of movement opportunities for your child on a daily base. Swimming, going to playgrounds, swinging, trampolining and cycling are great ways to engage the sensory systems and movement inputs support your child's regulation abilities throughout the day. Climbing (e.g. rock climbing) is a good sensory activity to engage our muscle sense, which helps to stay calm and organised.



8) Sun Screen Recommendations

- Explain to your child why we need sun protection as intense sun can damage the skin. Put sunscreen on at home already which is less stressful in a familiar environment.
- **Get the child 'ready'** for the act of applying sunscreen. Prior to application, have kids get some sea-themed proprioceptive input by 'crab walking', doing some jumping games or heavy work activity. This type of input can inhibit tactile sensitivity.
- **Sun Sprays and Sun Sticks** are often easier to apply as you do not need to rub them onto the skin. Having someone rubbing on their skin can be highly distressing and feel like pain and torture. A roll on application might be more beneficial as it provides deep pressure touch, and the child might be able to do it himself on some body parts.

- **Also try to consider that the sun screen should have a neutral smell.** Try different ones and let the child choose.
- Make sure that **all of your touch is expected and applied with firm pressure.** Use firm rubs when assisting the child to rub the lotion in rather than light touch which can be distressing. Let your child control your movements visually if possible.
- **Sun protection clothes** are a good way of protecting sensible skin from the sun too.
- Have **the child put some lotion on your legs/back and arms** and rub it in, which can support their planning skills and participation in the whole task.