

# ASPIRE TO KNOW...

## ...ALL ABOUT PEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY.

**When told that an occupational therapist will be treating their child many parents respond with “My child doesn’t have a job! Why do they need OT?” Although the professional name may be misleading, occupational therapists assist children with the functional tasks that occupy their lives, which include play and school. Development of motor skills, regulation of attention, sensory regulation and age appropriate self-care are just a few of the areas addressed by an occupational therapist.**

3rd Quarter, July 2010



Volume 1, Issue 4

### ...The Difference Between a “Picky” Eater and a “Resistant” Eater.

We all have food preferences and many toddlers can be referred to as “Picky” eaters. “Picky” eaters have an aversion to certain foods and a limited diet but they eventually eat enough of a variety for a balanced diet. However, mealtime can become a challenge when children become “Resistant” eaters.

#### **Characteristics of a Resistant Eater (1 or more of the following):**

- Limited food selection (10-15 foods or less)
- Limited food groups (refuses 1 or more food groups)
- Averse reaction to new foods (anxiety, tantrums, gagging or ill)
- Food jags (insists on 1 or more foods presented at every meal prepared in same way)
- Diagnosed with developmental delay (including but not limited to Autism Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation)

### ...What Sensory Integration Disorder Is.

Sensory Integration Disorder is a neurological process that occurs in all of us. We take in sensory information from our bodies and the world around us. Our brains organize, or “integrate” this information to make it meaningful to us. This integration allows us to respond automatically, efficiently, and comfortably in response to the specific sensory information we receive. If you have good sensory integration, processing and organizing this information happens automatically. Children who have inadequate sensory integration, or “Sensory Integration Disorder”, may require the help of an Occupational Therapist.

(SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR MORE INFO)



### ..How Occupational Therapists Can Address Handwriting Skills.

Pencil skills, and particularly handwriting, is a more complex skill than we often realize. A child’s ability to color within the lines or trace a shape is foundational for writing letters and words. Mastery of these skills enables children to focus on the content of their writing rather than pencil grasp or speed and movement. However, children are encouraged to begin writing while many of the seemingly basic skills are overlooked. AT ASPIRE...Our occupational therapists focus intervention on proper grasping patterns, strengthening of upper extremities including intrinsic hand musculature, and developmentally appropriate progression of skills.

### ...HOW TO CONTACT US.

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### ...What the signs of Sensory Integration Disorder are.

#### Children with Sensory Integration Disorder may have:

- Inappropriate and inconsistent responses to sensory stimulation
- Difficulty organizing and analyzing information from the senses
- Reduced ability to connect or “integrate” information from the senses
- Limited ability to respond to sensory information in a meaningful and appropriate manner
- Difficulty using sensory information to plan and execute actions

#### Some observable signs of Sensory Integration Disorder are:

- Hyper-sensitivity, hypo-sensitivity, or mixed sensitivities to sensory stimulation
- Avoids sensory input
- Seeks sensory input
- Unsure of body position
- Poor Motor Planning
- Poor coordination, inconsistent motor performances, difficulty learning new motor tasks
- Easily distracted, limited attending skills
- Over-aroused, high activity level, hyper-vigilant
- Under-aroused, low activity level, self-absorbed, passive

Intervention is required when sensory integration problems prevent children from adequately performing and participating in the activities of childhood, making it difficult to function at school, in public, and even at home. Occupational therapy intervention often includes a combination of regular treatment sessions and home and school programming suggestions. Therapy sessions can facilitate more appropriate responses to sensory input and can improve body awareness and motor skills.



### ...How Handwriting Typically Develops.

As there is a progression for gross motor skills (sitting, crawling and then walking independently), there is also a developmental progression to writing independently. The typical progression for all forms of written communication (lines, shapes, letters, numbers) is:

- Imitation of lines, shapes, letters, numbers
- Copying; After a child is able to imitate strokes from a parent/teacher with a good deal of accuracy, they should then move on toward copying the strokes.
- Drawing/Writing without a model-This may be done spontaneously or upon request, the child should be able to make the strokes independently without visual or verbal assistance.

Within this developmental progression, there is also a foundational order of writing:

- Vertical and horizontal lines, a circle, a cross, square and finally a triangle
- Capital Letters should be introduced first
- Numbers
- Lower case letters

Difficulty acquiring these skills after repeated attempts may warrant a consultation from your physician and an occupational therapy evaluation.



I would like to thank our Occupational Therapy Staff for all of their help with this newsletter. Your expert knowledge was greatly appreciated! Thank you to: Preeta Riggs, MOT, OTR, Caroline Morlan, MOT, OTR, and Amy Byrne, MOT, OTR. You are fantastic!!!