



# Humber Sensory Processing Service

Community Services for Children  
aged 0-18 years



## Spinning

Spinning behaviour in children with sensory processing difficulties is often linked to sensory seeking or sensory avoidance patterns. Some children may engage in spinning activities to regulate their sensory experiences.

The primary sense stimulated by spinning is the vestibular system, which is located in the inner ear and contributes to the sense of balance and spatial orientation. The vestibular system interacts closely with other sensory systems, such as proprioception and vision. Spinning can be over-alerting and children may not know when they have had too much of this input.

## Why children spin

- Some children with sensory processing difficulties are sensory seekers. They actively seek out certain sensations to meet their sensory needs. Spinning provides intense vestibular input, which involves the sense of movement and balance and can be calming and organising for sensory seekers.
- Spinning can help children regulate their arousal levels. The vestibular system plays a crucial role in self-regulation by influencing alertness and attention. Spinning might be a way for children to achieve their optimal level of arousal.

## Positives of spinning

- For some children, spinning can have a calming effect, helping them self-soothe and reduce anxiety or stress.
- It may assist in regulating arousal levels, helping children maintain an optimal state for learning and engagement.



- Engaging in spinning activities can contribute to sensory integration, helping the child process and organise sensory information more effectively.

## Challenges of spinning

- Excessive spinning may lead to the child becoming overstimulated. The vestibular sense can have an alerting as well as calming effect on the nervous system. If overstimulated, then it may take a while to reorganise.
- Excessive spinning may make it challenging for children to participate in group activities, affecting their social interactions.
- If a child relies heavily on spinning for self-regulation, there may be concerns about dependency on this specific sensory input.
- Uncontrolled or excessive spinning may lead to safety concerns, such as falls or collisions with other objects in the environment.

## Intervention and support

- Encourage a variety of sensory activities to provide alternative ways for the child to meet their sensory needs and stimulate the vestibular system for regulating input.
- Incorporate structured breaks that include spinning activities to help the child regulate without disrupting the learning environment.
- As spinning can be over-alerting, it is important to recognise when the child is becoming overstimulated and redirect them to another task/activity. Providing proprioceptive or deep pressure input would be a good way to redirect a child after spinning.



- Other examples of calming vestibular input would be activities that move the head out midline, such as – being on a swing, rocking gently back and forth or side to side sitting in a rocking chair.



For more advice and strategies like this, you can visit our website:  
**[sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk](https://sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk)**

Or you can contact us with a question on the email address below:  
**[hnf-tr.humbersensoryprocessingservice@nhs.net](mailto:hnf-tr.humbersensoryprocessingservice@nhs.net)**

