

A Parent's Guide to Proprioception



What Is Proprioception?

Proprioception is our sense of body awareness. It helps us know where our body is in space and how much force to use when we move. Many of us do not hear much about this sense, but it has a big impact on how our children feel and function.

Why It Matters for Autistic Kids

Autistic children often process sensory information differently, and proprioception is one area that many parents are surprised to learn about. A lot of autistic kids actually seek out proprioceptive input because it helps them feel calm, grounded, and in control of their bodies.

How It Is Different From Touch

Touch helps you feel things on your skin, especially light touch. Proprioception comes from the muscles and joints and gives deeper feedback. Many autistic kids dislike light touch but love deep pressure because it feels calming and predictable.

Common Ways Kids Seek Proprioceptive Input

Parents often notice things like

- Walking on tiptoes
- Bumping into objects or people
- Wanting tight hugs or firm pressure
- Chewing on things
- Enjoying swimming or being in water
- Using weighted blankets or vests
- Lifting or carrying heavy items



These are all ways kids try to get the deep pressure their bodies are craving.

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Why Kids Might Need More Input

Proprioceptive input helps kids regulate their emotions and stay focused. Stress or overwhelm can make their need for deep pressure even stronger, even if the stress is not sensory related.

Things to Keep an Eye On

Most of these behaviors are safe, but sometimes kids look for input in ways that could put them at risk.

For example:

- Hiding in tight spaces during emergencies
- Going into water without knowing how to swim
- Using self-injury as a way to get pressure or understand their body

Offering safer options can really help.

What Has Helped Other Parents

- Being intentional with touch and giving deep, firm pressure only when the child wants it
- Providing safe heavy work activities like pushing, pulling, or carrying
- Offering weighted items if the child enjoys them
- Building in movement breaks or sensory activities throughout the day
- Letting your child explore what helps them regulate

Who Can Help

An occupational therapist can guide you in finding the right activities, tools, and routines to support your child's sensory needs.