

Child Health Occupational Therapy

Messy Play Ideas/Food Is Fun

INTRODUCTION

Sensory activities provide children with another meaningful avenue for learning. Because children learn best by having "hands on" experiences with materials, sensory experiences are vital to young children's learning. Children with tactile defensiveness are over sensitive to touch. Messy play provides the child with a fun way to experience new textures. Increased exposure to a wide variety of textures can decrease the level of tactile defensiveness.

Materials

Water
Sand
Finger Paints
Playdoh
Crazy Soap
Bubbles
Cotton Wool
String/Wool
Glitter
Shaving Foam
Gloop
Chalk
Glue



The following messy play activity ideas will help to encourage children to explore lots of different textures and materials.

Water - Half fill a large basin or bath with water and provide different types and sizes of containers for filling, measuring, pouring. Play in the water with boats, ducks and fish. Add a tiny drop of washing up liquid or bubble bath and use a straw to blow through and make lots of bubbles (food colouring can be added to make it more exciting). Be careful not to suck through the straw!

Sand - Sand Pit – hide objects e.g. little animals, shells, marbles etc in the sand. Use both hands to dig in the sand until all objects have been found. Water can be added to dampen the sand for making sandcastles. Play in the sand with trucks, dumpers and diggers. Place some dry sand onto a tray and spread out with both hands. Use fingers to draw shapes and patterns in the sand. Shake tray to make the patterns disappear.

Paints - Spread paint onto a tray. Place hands in finger paint and press onto a large piece of paper to make handprints. Spoon out different colours next to each other on the tray and gently swirl them around, place hands in and press onto paper. Change the handprint into a fish by adding fins, eyes etc or make up a design of your own.

Spread paint onto a tray and place bare feet in it to then walk across a large piece of paper to make footprints.

Dip fingers into different colours of paint to make lovely pictures e.g. flowers, ladybirds, seaside picture etc.

Use sponges of different shapes and sizes to dip into paint and press onto paper.

Playdoh - Mould playdoh animals/insects e.g. roll playdoh out using two hands to make a snake then curl it up from one end to the other to make a snail.
Roll pinch and mould the playdoh to make a plate of food e.g. roll out a sausage, roll tiny pieces of it between fingers to make peas or beans etc.

Crazy Soap - Squirt crazy soap onto a tray and spread around with hands. Draw patterns and pictures in it.
Squirt crazy soap into hands to shape and mould into a ball. Makes a great snowman! Clap hands together to make snow.

Bubbles - Take turns. Catch and pop bubbles by clapping hands then swap and hold the wand to blow bubbles.

Cotton Wool- Fill tub with cotton wool balls or tear lots of pieces off a roll of cotton wool. Hide lots of little objects in it and dig through the cotton wool until all objects are found.
Stick pieces of cotton wool onto card to make pictures e.g. stick a small amount of cotton wool onto card and draw or paint legs and a head to make it into a sheep, Make a snow scene picture.

String/Wool- Paint penne pasta and let it dry. Glue on sequins or glitter. Thread onto wool or string and tie ends together to make a necklace or bracelet.
Have a large piece of card or paper. Spoon different colours of paint onto a tray and pull string through it, drag string across the card to make different and interesting patterns.

Glitter - Spread glue onto card and sprinkle glitter on or sprinkle over pictures in previous activities to make them sparkle!

Shave Foam - Squirt into hands and spread over a large tray or mirror for drawing and making patterns.

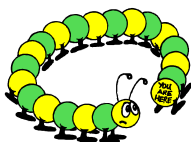
Gloop - Pour a decent amount of cornflour into a large bowl and add a little water at a time to form a slightly runny/pouring consistency.
Spread gloop over a tray, draw patterns and shapes in it and watch them disappear!
Pour gloop into a bowl or tub and hide objects in it e.g. marble run game – hide marbles in gloop, child has to use hands to search in the gloop in order to find a marble.
Scoop up handfuls of gloop and allow it to drizzle through hands onto the tray, make patterns.

Chalk - Use thin or chunky chalk to draw shapes/patterns on a blackboard and make them disappear! You will need a paintbrush, a pot of water and a blackboard. Example: draw a rocket on the blackboard and make it disappear into space by dipping the paintbrush into water and painting over the lines!
Draw with different coloured chalks on card or paper.

Pasta - Make a picture by painting different types of uncooked pasta and sticking them onto a piece of card. Progress onto using cooked pasta. Paint penne pasta and let it dry. Glue on sequins or glitter. Thread onto wool or string and tie ends together to make a necklace or bracelet.
Fill a large tub or bowl with uncooked pasta and hide objects in it. Use hands to explore pasta until all objects are found. Progress onto using cooked pasta.

Rice - Fill a large bowl or tub with dry rice, lentils or broth mixture and hide lots of little objects e.g. animals, shells, marbles, pieces of jigsaw etc in the rice. Use both hands to dig in the rice until all objects have been found.
Play in the rice with trucks, dumpers and diggers.
Place some dry rice onto a tray and spread out with both hands. Use fingers to draw shapes and patterns in the rice. Shake the tray to make the patterns disappear.

Bug Craft - You will need card, corrugated cardboard, pipe cleaners or straws, glue and finger paints. Cut out different shapes of corrugated cardboard e.g. circle, oval, long sausage shapes. Examples:
Caterpillar - Glue long sausage shaped cardboard onto a piece of card. Cut one or two green pipe cleaners into short pieces and stick them into the zig zag bits of corrugated cardboard (underside) to look like legs sticking out. Paint the caterpillar yellow and finger paint eyes on and green dots all over body.
Bug – glue oval shaped cardboard onto a piece of card. Use pipe cleaners, finger paints and any other materials you have to make up your own bug, give it a name!
It doesn't have to be a bug. You can also make lovely flowers or designs of your own.



HAVE LOTS OF FUN!



Food is Fun - Play Ideas and Target Foods

Fussy eating is very common. There are a number of reasons:

Sensory hypersensitivity – children may over react to and be put off by textures, smells and the sight of food.

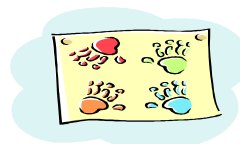
Rigid behaviour patterns – children become restricted in the range of foods they will eat and will often only eat brand specific food. This is because if they are used to a certain food they know what to expect e.g. a McDonald's hamburger always tastes the same.

Children may have difficulty generalising and get stuck on the look, taste or texture of the food. They will often not eat foods that are touching each other or combined and will show disgust at the smell or sight of non-accepted foods.

Foods

Pasta
Cereal
Rice
Beans
Spaghetti hoops
Yogurt
Jam

Custard
Jelly
Popcorn
Tomato Sauce
Vegetables
Fruit
Water



Start with dry foods eg pasta and progress to wet foods (cooked pasta). Then encourage mixing foods/textures together.

Vary temperature of food if possible.

Encourage child to assist with tidying up/washing up if possible.

Make play purposeful e.g. find marbles in non foods/foods to post in marble run, find bricks to build tower.

Keep activities non-threatening.



Activity Ideas

Dolly/Tea set/
Face painting -

mash up foods or combine foods eg. stir yogurt into cereal and feed to dolly.

Farm/Animals -

make tracks in tomato sauce etc with animals and tractors.
hide animals under large pasta shells and gradually make it messier.

Pictures -

use different types of food/non foods to make pictures of flowers, faces, shapes etc. Use paper plates?

Cars/Tracks -

spread something messy on tray or table and build roads with spaghetti, penne pasta etc.
use broccoli or cauliflower for trees.
drive cars along road to make tracks.

Marble Run/
Ball Cascade -

find marbles, balls in foods or non-foods.

Threading -

thread penne pasta onto laces or straws.

Colour Matching - mix different types of fruits and vegetables together eg
raisins and grapes - sort by colour
broccoli and carrots - sort by colour
progress to wetter/mushier types eg bananas, sliced tomatoes

Once the child is happy to touch and explore the food, progress to smelling, licking, biting and tasting one small piece.

Messy food is fun sessions should be done away from where the child normally eats and not carried out at mealtimes.

When you think your child is ready to have a food introduced at mealtimes, place the targeted food on a separate plate a little distance away from your child. There should be no expectation to eat it the first time it is introduced. Gradually move it closer and when you think your child is ready, place it on their plate. Encourage your child to tolerate the food on their plate then lick or taste it when they are ready. This may have to be done gradually over a few mealtimes.

Example:

Target foods: pasta and sauce

Start with dry pasta (variety of shapes and colours)

Choose activities – threading, pictures, patterns etc.

Progress to cooked pasta

Continue with play activities.

Encourage smelling it

When happy to smell it progress to licking it

When happy to lick it progress to biting it (doesn't have to swallow)

When happy to bite it progress to eating one small piece

Then tolerate on plate at snack/mealtimes

Progress to pasta with sauce eg tomato ketchup and continue with play activities to allow your child to become familiar with the smell and texture of it.

Encourage smelling it

When happy to smell it progress to licking it

When happy to lick it progress to biting it (doesn't have to swallow)

When happy to bite it progress to eating one small piece

Then tolerate on a plate at snack/mealtimes

Each stage may take a couple of weeks or more of daily practice.



Provide the experience of food in a non-threatening way. Make a scrap book of the foods your child has tried and liked.

Useful websites:

www.playscotland.org

www.learning4kids.net