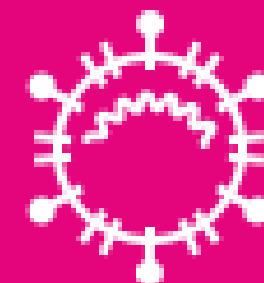


# COVID-19

## Sensory considerations & tips for people with SPD



2020 gave rise to a global pandemic of COVID-19. This is a respiratory illness, which means it affects the parts of your body you use to breathe: your nose, throat and lungs. Symptoms might include fever, a cough, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath.

One way to prevent contracting virus is to wash our hands regularly. When we cough or sneeze these tiny droplets can quickly spread if we touch other surfaces. Good hand washing is therefore very important to keep us all safe.

However, we know some people with SPD find it difficult to wash their hands, so we have given you what you need to both understand and support strategies to make this easy as possible.

### Sensory support strategies

#### Tactile

Some people are hyper-sensitive to textures, substances or temperatures. They may find the feeling of the water or soap on their skin overwhelming. You may also have noticed that this person may not like getting messy.



**Tips - Use unperfumed soaps or hand gels, or have other familiar smells around to help over-ride these and provide comfort.**

#### Smell

The scent of soaps or anti-bacterial gel can be overwhelming.



**Tips - Try using a wet towel with soap soaked in to wipe hands on, or dry soap that dissolves in their hands. This can also be a good fidget for those who like to feel things on their hands.**

#### Visual

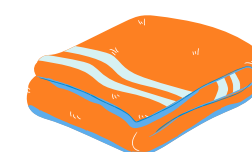
The visual complexity of the bubbles in soap, or reflective surfaces in bathrooms may be too much for some people with hyper-sensitivities.



**Tips - A soap that doesn't make bubbles like gel or paper soap. You can also try sunglasses or hats to reduce glare or wash your hands in a different environment.**

#### General Tips

- **Use a timer** as a prompt to wash hands and / or how long to wash for (can be visual, musical or vibrating). This element of control helps with regulation.
- **Singing songs** can make washing a little more fun. You could even make up a hand-washing song! Music is a great way to relax and engage people who may otherwise feel anxious during activities.
- **Try a different soap or use a moisturiser** if your hands are feeling sore.
- **Don't worry about drying your hands** if the towel itself is causing you to feel overwhelmed. Hands dry quickly in the air by waving them around!
- Some people find the physical body awareness difficult, so **try tapping, tugging or typing** to 'wake up' your fingers.
- **Filling a bowl with soapy water** can be less daunting for someone who finds it difficult to apply soap directly to the skin.
- **Make the water more exciting!** Consider adding food colouring or a scent to the water. Try new sponges or puff balls to wash and squeeze soap through. Add toys to the water.
- **Using a towel which is already wet and soapy** can feel less intense and can be comforting for people who like a fidget.



Wearing a face mask helps reduce smells around me. I can now go to the supermarket and do my shopping without being overwhelmed with the smell of flowers and meat.



You may also be interested in downloading our 'COVID-19: Recognising symptoms in people with SPD' information sheet from our website

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