

# Fact Sheet: Sensory Processing Challenges in ADHD Women

**Overview:** ADHD affects attention and behavior and how women process sensory information, particularly touch. Research has shown that many ADHD women experience heightened sensitivity to touch, which can impact their daily lives, interactions, and comfort levels.



## 1. Increased Sensitivity to Touch:

- ADHD women often experience touch more intensely than neurotypical women. This heightened sensitivity can make simple actions like wearing certain fabrics or receiving a hug feel overwhelming.

## 2. Link Between Sensitivity and ADHD Symptoms:

- There is a direct correlation between how sensitive someone is to touch and the severity of their ADHD symptoms, such as inattention and hyperactivity.

## 3. Sensory Overload:

- ADHD women may struggle with sensory overload, especially when exposed to multiple tactile stimuli at once. This can lead to discomfort and difficulty focusing.

## 4. Challenges with Self and Social Touch:

- Touching their skin (e.g., scratching an itch) or being touched by others (e.g., a pat on the back) can be more intense and harder to process compared to neurotypical women. However, touch from objects (like holding a pen) doesn't pose the same challenge.

## 5. Impact on Daily Life:

- These sensory processing issues can affect daily activities and social interactions, making understanding and adapting to their unique sensory needs essential.

What This Means for Therapists and Loved Ones:

### • Understanding & Empathy:

- Recognize that what might feel like a light touch to you can feel overwhelming to an ADHD woman. Their reactions to touch aren't overreactions but based on a different sensory experience.

### • Adjusting Physical Interactions:

- Please always ask for consent before you initiate physical contact. Be aware that even well-intentioned touches, like a comforting hug, can be distressing.

### • Supporting Sensory Comfort:

- Help them find strategies to manage sensory overload, such as choosing comfortable clothing, creating quiet spaces, and using tools like weighted blankets or fidget toys.

### • Creating a Sensory-Friendly Environment:

- Consider their sensory preferences in shared spaces. Reducing unnecessary tactile stimuli can improve their focus and comfort.

# Worksheet: Understanding Your Sensory Sensitivities

**Purpose:**

This worksheet helps ADHD women explore and understand their unique sensory sensitivities, particularly to touch. It's designed to increase self-awareness and develop strategies to manage sensory challenges.

## 1. Reflect on Your Sensitivity to Touch:

☐ **How do different fabrics feel against your skin?**

(Circle all that apply):

Soft | Itchy | Comfortable | Irritating | Tight | Loose | Warm | Cool

☐ **Do you feel more comfortable when touching your own skin or when others touch you?**

(Circle one):

Self-touch | Touch from others | Neither | Both are challenging

☐ **Describe a recent experience where you felt overwhelmed by touch:**

■ **What happened?**

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■ **How did it make you feel?**

■ **How did you respond?**

## 2. Identify Situations That Cause Sensory Overload:

☐ **In what situations do you feel overwhelmed by touch?**

(Check all that apply):

- When in a crowded place
- When wearing certain clothes
- During social interactions
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **How do you usually react in these situations?**

(Circle all that apply):

Withdraw | Feel anxious | Try to ignore it | Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Develop Coping Strategies:

☐ **What changes could you make to your environment to reduce sensory overload?**

☐ **How can you communicate your sensory needs to others?**  
(e.g., asking for consent before touching, explaining your preferences)

☐ **What activities help you calm down after sensory overload?**  
(e.g., listening to calming music, taking deep breaths, using a weighted blanket)

#### 4. Practice Sensory Self-Care:

☐ **List three ways you can take care of your sensory needs today:**

#### 5. Reflect and Adjust:

☐ **How do you feel after using these strategies?**  
(Circle one):  
Better | The same | Worse

☐ **What adjustments can you make to improve your sensory comfort in the future?**

#### **Remember:**

Your sensory experiences are valid; understanding them is a key step towards better managing your ADHD. Please share your insights with loved ones and therapists to create a supportive environment that is tailored to your needs.