

Sensory-Processing Challenges Related to Touch in ADHD Women Fact Sheet + Self-Reflection Worksheet

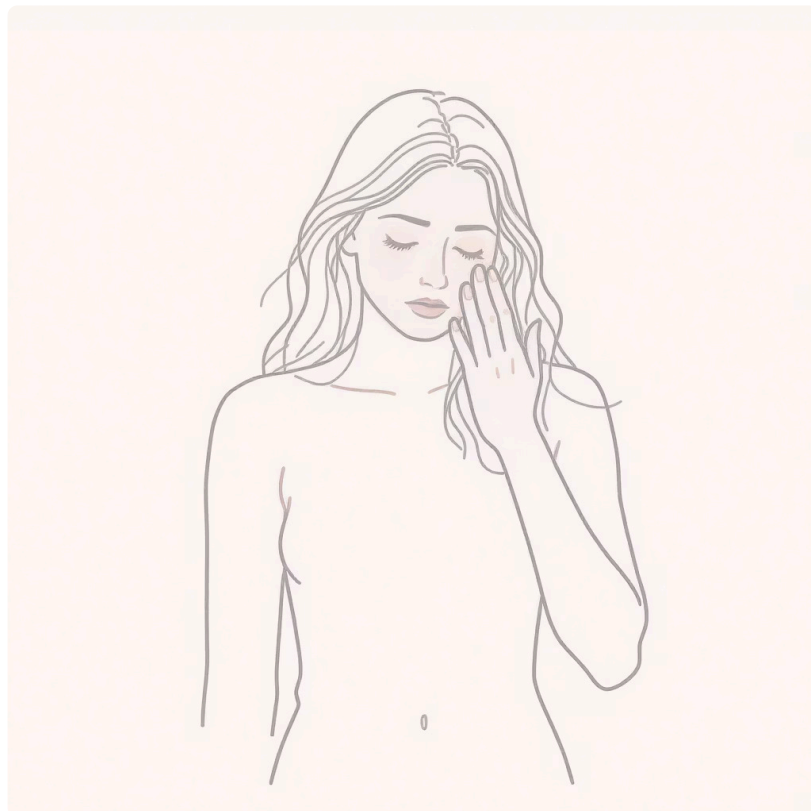
Sensory Issues Related to Touch in ADHD Women

What It Is

Many ADHD women process touch differently. This can mean touch feels more intense, distracting, or uncomfortable compared to neurotypical people.

Why It Matters

Touch sensitivity can affect comfort, focus, mood, and relationships. It can influence daily routines, clothing choices, and how you interact socially.



Key Facts

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- Heightened Sensitivity** – Light touch (like a pat on the back or fabric on your skin) can feel stronger or more irritating than expected.
 - Direct Link to ADHD Symptoms** – Sensory sensitivity is often tied to other ADHD challenges, such as inattention, restlessness, and emotional overwhelm.
 - Sensory Overload** – Crowded or busy environments can trigger overload when too much touch input happens at once.
 - Self vs. Social Touch** – Touching your own skin might feel different from being touched by others; one may be easier to tolerate.
 - Impact on Daily Life** – Clothing choices, greetings, and seating in public spaces can all be shaped by your sensory comfort levels.

What Helps

Wear comfortable, non-irritating fabrics (soft, tagless, seamless).

Ask for and offer consent before physical touch.

Use sensory tools like weighted blankets, fidgets, or cozy textures that feel safe.

Create sensory-friendly environments with control over touch input.

Why This Worksheet Matters

A light tap, a sweater tag, or a crowded room might feel minor to some people, but for many ADHD women, these can be overwhelming. This isn't being "too sensitive," it's how your nervous system processes input.

Touch sensitivity can affect your comfort, focus, and even relationships. By noticing your patterns and finding strategies that work, you can lower overload and feel more at ease in your body.



What This Worksheet Will Help You Do

- Notice how different types of touch affect you
- Identify situations that cause sensory overload
- Develop strategies to improve daily comfort
- Communicate your sensory needs clearly

1

You can fill it out all at once or in short bursts.

2

Pause if you feel overwhelmed — there's no rush.

3

There are no "right" answers; this is about learning what works for *your* body.

1. Reflect on Your Sensitivity to Touch

How do different fabrics feel against your skin?
(check all that apply)

Soft	Itchy
Comfortable	Irritating
Tight	Loose
Warm	Cool

Do you feel more comfortable with...

Self-touch (touching your own skin)	Touch from others
Neither — both are challenging	Both are fine

Describe a recent experience where you felt overwhelmed by touch:

"When my friend hugged me unexpectedly, it felt overwhelming and I froze."

What happened?

How did it make you feel?

How did you respond?

2. Identify Situations That Cause Tactile Sensory Overload

When do you feel overwhelmed by touch? (check all that apply)

In a crowded place	Wearing certain clothes
During social interactions	Other: _____

How do you usually react?

Withdraw	Feel anxious
Try to ignore it	Other: _____

3. Practice Sensory Self-Accommodation

Consider these changes to your environment to help manage tactile sensory overload:

- Switching to tagless clothing
- Keeping a sweater with soft fabric at work
- Using a seat cushion
- Placing a blanket over scratchy chairs
- Reducing crowd exposure
- Keeping a “quiet corner” in shared spaces
- Add your own suggestions

4. Practice Self-Advocacy

How can you communicate your sensory needs to others?

Sentence starters:

- ☐ "I feel more comfortable if..."
- ☐ "Please avoid touching my..."
- ☐ "I need space when..."

5. Practice Self-Care

Activities that help me calm down after sensory overload:

When you've hit sensory overload, your brain is processing more input than it can handle.

That overload keeps your nervous system in a high alert state, with your heart rate up, muscles tense, and focus scattered.

Calming activities work by reducing incoming sensory input, replacing overwhelming sensations with safe ones, and helping your body feel grounded again.

These activities are not just "nice to do." They give your nervous system the right signals to shift from fight-or-flight into rest-and-recover mode.

For ADHD women, this shift can make it easier to think clearly, regulate emotions, and re-engage without feeling drained.

Ideas for Calming Down After Tactile Overload.

- **Weighted blanket** – The steady, even pressure can help your nervous system shift into a calmer state.
- **Quiet, dim space** – Lowering light and sound gives your brain fewer inputs to process.
- **Soft, repetitive movement** – Rocking, gentle swaying, or walking slowly can soothe and regulate your system.
- **Fidget tool or tactile object** – Something smooth, soft, or familiar to touch can help you focus on one safe sensory input.
- **Slow breathing** – Counting your inhale and exhale helps your body signal that it's safe to relax.
- **Comforting texture** – Wrapping in a soft throw, wearing a favorite hoodie, or using a silky pillowcase can create a sense of safety.
- **Nature break** – Stepping outside for fresh air or grounding through your senses (feeling the breeze, listening to leaves) can reset your system.
- **Soothing sounds** – White noise, rain sounds, or quiet instrumental music can replace overwhelming background noise.

Remember:

Your sensory experiences are valid. Understanding them is a step toward building comfort, control, and confidence. Sharing your insights with loved ones and therapists helps create an environment that truly supports you.

5. Map Your Sensitivities

Use this body outline to:

- Circle areas most sensitive to touch
- Shade where textures/pressures are uncomfortable
- Add notes for specific triggers (e.g., "itchy tags," "tight waistband")

