

Target Behavior: Head Hitting

Things to consider: Try behavior analyses to see if there are specific triggers for the head-hitting. It might be helpful to use the A-B-C approach (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) to analyze the behavior. You may find that the behavior increases during times of stress, or in response to certain settings or environments. If so, think about what accommodations may be helpful. From a sensory perspective, head-hitting can indicate that the individual is seeking proprioceptive (deep pressure), vestibular (through vibration) and tactile input to the head or face. Sometimes self-injurious behaviors are also a way to get a release of endorphins, which are the body's natural painkillers. As with any form of self-injurious behaviors, it is advisable to discuss it with a doctor to rule out any undiagnosed pain or discomfort.

Sensory Diet Strategies:

- throughout the day, encourage activities that provide proprioceptive (heavy work) input to the arms and hands such as
 - crawling
 - pushing and pulling (or holding onto a rope while being pulled on a scooterboard)
 - wearing wrist weights
- offer vibration to the head through a vibrating brush or an oral vibrator
- try to provide a longer sensory break every couple of hours (10-20 minutes for most kids). Here's a great way to structure these longer breaks:
 - First, let the child choose a whole-body proprioceptive activity:
 - scooter board (on tummy)
 - rolling on a mat or being rolled up like a "burrito"
 - an obstacle course that includes a lot of crawling
 - Second, focus on sensory input to the head:
 - use oral vibration to the mouth
 - offer a vibrating brush for the head
 - play with textured fabrics and soft toys that can provide tactile input to the child's hands and face
 - Third, offer an area of retreat, like a small tent or a squeeze box as a way to escape the environment that may be over-stimulating for a little while.

If possible, consult with a behavioral psychologist for additional strategies for how to handle this self-injurious behavior. Such strategies will vary from child to child.