

Sensory Concepts

Using Weighted Items

Using weighted toys, lap bags or blankets provides extra proprioceptive and tactile input through the sensory systems, helping to calm and regulate energies.

For children who seek additional input to fill their sensory cup, weighted items can be a useful tool. They are also helpful in providing calming input for children who are overwhelmed by their sensory environment.

WHY would you use Weighted Items?

- To provide additional tactile and proprioceptive input through the nervous system which can assist in calming and regulating focus

WHAT is a weighted item?

- There are different options for weighted products depending on the age of the child and the environment they are used in
 - Weighted lap bags which look like a wheat pillow or can be made in the shape of toy animals
 - Weighted shoulder pads which go from one shoulder, across the back of the neck to the other shoulder
 - Weighted blankets for rest or sleep time
 - Weighted vests
 - weighted back pack

HOW do you use Weighted Items?

- It is advisable to speak to an occupational therapist or physiotherapist who can advise you on the correct item for your child
- Studies have indicated that the weight should be 5 - 10% of a child's body weight
- Duration of use should be monitored and regular break times allocated
- Start with short periods of time and build up as required or tolerated
- Often it is best to use for short durations to assist with focus for particular tasks, such as writing or sitting to listen to a story

WHEN would you use weighted products?

- When a child needs help to:
 - Calm down / feel less anxious
 - Sit still and focus
 - Tolerate other sensations such as a noisy room

Other considerations for weighted products:

- When introducing weighted blankets or vests it is a good idea to keep a journal of duration of use and reaction to use
- Weighted blankets may be used to assist a child in calming for sleep time but should be removed once the child is asleep
- Weighted products including blankets should be able to be easily removed by the child
- Weighted blankets are not recommended for children with heart conditions, diabetes, blood pressure concerns, breathing problems, skin conditions such as eczema

