

Vestibular Sensory System

A resource booklet



What is the Vestibular Sensory System?

The vestibular system is the sensory system that helps us understand:

- Movement
- Balance
- Direction
- Where our body is in space

It's located in the inner ear and works closely with vision and body awareness (proprioception).

This system helps us:

- Sit upright
- Walk, run, climb
- Know which way is up
- Feel safe when moving

How Vestibular Differences May Look in Autistic & SEN Children

Every child is different. Some children may be:

Vestibular seeking (needing more movement)

- Constantly moving, spinning or jumping
- Enjoy swinging, climbing, being upside down
- Finds it hard to sit still
- Loves fast or intense movement

Vestibular avoiding (movement feels overwhelming)

- Fearful of swings, slides or climbing
- Gets dizzy or nauseous easily
- Dislikes feet leaving the ground
- Becomes anxious during movement-based activities

Neither is “wrong” – it’s about how their nervous system processes movement.

Why does Vestibular Support matter?

When the vestibular system is dysregulated, children may:

- Struggle with attention
- Feel unsafe or anxious
- Experience meltdowns during transitions
- Avoid physical play or seek it constantly

Supporting this system can help with:

- Regulation
- Confidence
- Focus
- Emotional safety

Ways to Support Vestibular Sensory Needs

Gentle Movement (great for vestibular avoiders)

- Slow rocking
- Side-to-side swaying
- Walking on uneven ground (grass, sand)
- Gentle yoga poses

Active Movement (for vestibular seekers)

- Swings (start slow, build up)
- Trampoline jumping
- Spinning games (short bursts)
- Rolling down hills
- Obstacle courses

Tip: Always balance fast movement with heavy work (pushing, carrying) to help the body regulate.

Everyday Vestibular Support

Vestibular support can be made fun and exciting so it creates a more relaxed and efficient approach.

- Rocking chairs/ Spinning chairs
- Therapy balls for sitting, bouncing
- Scooter boards, lay on your front and move with your arms
- Dancing to music- make this fun, play their favourite song!
- Animal walks: how does a crab walk?

At Autism Explorers, vestibular input is naturally supported through:

- Spinning chairs and outdoor play
- Flexible movement opportunities
- Child-led exploration
- Sensory-safe spaces to rest and regulate

Vestibular sensory stimulation is important and is a way of a child's body communicating.

