



Self-Stimulating Behaviours

Information Sheet

As Occupational Therapists, we often get asked about self-stimulating behaviours. It's a goal area we work with children and families to address. Self-stimulating behaviours can be a source of increased stress and concern for families. We have compiled this information as a helpful starting point.

What are self stimulating behaviours?

- Self stimulating behaviours are usually repetitive and can involve movements or sounds.
- Examples may include biting nails, flapping hands, cracking knuckles, jiggling a foot, whistling and masturbation.
- Most of us engage in self stimulating behaviours (for example tapping a foot, chewing on a pencil), however some self stimulating behaviours impact a person's ability to engage in their daily occupations e.g. school.

What to expect from Occupational Therapy when addressing self stimulating behaviour goals:

- Every child is different and there is not a 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to addressing self stimulating behaviours.
- Your OT will work with you and your child to identify strategies that will only be known to be effective if your child trials them
- Your OT can offer strategies that may enable your child to self regulate their emotions in a positive way.
- Alternative behaviours may be identified as beneficial for your child to engage in.