

## TOUCH

### What is this developmental skill?

Touch processing is the ability to interpret information received through the skin. It helps children identify textures, temperature, pain, pressure, and comforting physical contact while distinguishing between safe and potentially harmful sensations.

### How does this normally develop?

From birth, nurturing touch is one of the primary ways infants experience safety. Holding, cuddling, feeding, bathing, and comforting all strengthen the brain's interpretation of touch. As children grow, varied tactile experiences continue refining this system.

### How can neglect interfere with its development?

Neglected children may receive too little nurturing touch or experience touch that is inconsistent, frightening, or painful. Their brains may become unusually sensitive to touch or fail to notice sensory input that others easily detect.

### What might this look like?

Children may:

- Avoid hugs or certain clothing textures.
- Become distressed during grooming.
- Constantly touch objects or people.
- Seek deep pressure.
- Have difficulty with messy play.
- Overreact to light touch.
- Underreact to injuries.
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### Parenting Implications

Respect the child's comfort with physical contact while gradually introducing positive tactile experiences through play, blankets, pillows, sensory bins, play dough, water play, and opportunities for deep-pressure activities when appropriate.

### From Understanding to Attunement

Instead of assuming a child is rejecting affection or seeking attention, caregivers can recognize that touch itself may feel different for that child's nervous system. Sensitivity and patience help rebuild feelings of safety.