Common Question and Reply:
Why does my child have this?

Research continues to be done to help us answer this question. In OT, children and parents are encouraged to understand their difficulties, to work on challenges and to learn strategies to compensate for these difficulties.

Some children may be diagnosed with Sensory Processing Disorder, Developmental Coordination Disorder, Learning Disability, or Attention Deficit Disorder.
### Sensory Motor Program

This pamphlet is designed to help answer some of the questions you may have about Sensory Motor Therapy. Some details are provided regarding the program offered in the Occupational Therapy (OT) Department at SickKids.

### Who:
The Program is offered to children between the ages of 5 to 12, of average to above average intelligence, who are experiencing difficulties with fine motor coordination (use of small muscles of the hand, e.g. to write, manipulate small object), gross motor coordination (use of large muscles, e.g. to maintain posture, balance) and/or visual motor coordination (how eyes direct hands to move, e.g. to throw, write on lines).

### What:
This program helps to promote Sensory Motor functions, which act as a foundation for skill development.

We take in information from our environment, such as touch (feeling the pencil in our hand), and we organize it in the brain so that we can respond to it in an adaptive or useful manner. This is an automatic process for most of us but not for some.

### Where:
Parents watch therapy from a small viewing room through a one-way mirror. They may meet other parents and discuss strategies or exchange resources. Following sessions brief feedback periods are provided to parents to discuss strategies and exchange information. Additional education for parents is ongoing through video, handouts, etc.

### How:
Children are seen either on an individual basis or in a group depending on their needs and behavior/attention. They are seen once a week for one-hour sessions for approximately 6 to 8 weeks. The schedule depends on the nature of the child’s difficulties and is based on OT assessment done in the community or here at SickKids.

Therapy involves ongoing assessment and treatment of sensory and motor needs.

Some sensory systems are:
A) Touch – how well we interpret what we touch and where we are touched.
B) Vestibular – how we feel our body move and respond to balance requirements.
C) Proprioceptive – tells us where our muscles and joints are in space, without looking.

Some children are over-sensitive to movement, or touch and may react in an aggressive or an avoidant manner. Some crave sensory input, presenting as over active. Others may be under-reactive and appear lethargic or lazy.

### Why:
An important goal of OT is to help patients to function just like their friends or peers, at school and at home. Problems with interpreting and/or responding to sensory information can lead to poor ability to motor plan new or unfamiliar tasks (e.g. learning to break down the steps of skipping with a rope), or to poor eye hand coordination (mazes, dot to dot, copying from board in school). Children may begin to experience frustration and low self-esteem. They may fear failure, may stop trying or may fool around in class to avoid “discovery.” Teachers and parents may not realize why the child is “underachieving,” not following directions, or being inattentive. Parents gain knowledge and understanding of their children’s behavior and learn strategies to help their children.