

Using a Deep Pressure Vest



Purpose: A deep pressure vest is used as a calming strategy for children who find it difficult to sit still or to remain calm. It may be used in conjunction with other deep pressure or resistance activities.

Length of Time: The body accommodates to deep pressure after 10-15 minutes and will not be effective if worn longer than this. However, if the child is engaged in an activity and coping well, it is suggested that the vest remain on until the activity is complete. Removing the vest in the middle of an activity could be disruptive in and of itself. It should not be used again for at least ½ an hour or longer. During this time provide opportunities for deep pressure such as those activities suggested below.

When to wear:

1. Choose times when the child typically finds it most difficult to sit still and/or to attend to a task or in situations when they become anxious.
2. If you can “read” the signals of increasing agitation, anxiety, or excitement, put it on before he has escalated in an attempt to regulate his emotions. Once he has become dysregulated, a vest will seldom work to calm him down.
3. A vest can also be worn in conjunction with other deep pressure seating arrangements such as while sitting in a bean bag chair.

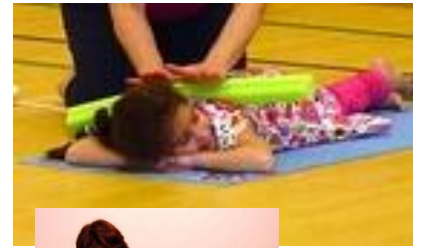
When not to wear: A vest should not be worn during active activities such as during gym, “free time”, when moving freely around the room, etc. You may use deep pressure and resistance more appropriate to the activity such as pushing a heavy piece of equipment across the room, crawling through a lycra tunnel pushing a weighted ball, using a ghost bag, rolling over a therapy ball or having one rolled over them.

Will a deep pressure vest help my child?:

The only way to determine this is to try it. Children who benefit from deep pressure respond to it immediately. If they continually try to remove it or do not remain calm with it on, then it is unlikely that it is of benefit to them. You can try other forms of deep pressure such as bear hugs (if appropriate), squeezes to arms, shoulders, head squeeze, joint compression or other forms of deep pressure as indicated by the student. Children who respond to deep pressure vests often seek deep pressure in other ways such as requesting bear hugs, squeezes to various parts of their body – head, arms, hands, fingers, joints. Some children with anxiety who do not like to be touched or respond to deep pressure touch rather than light touch may respond to a deep pressure vest.

Other deep pressure activities:

1. Rolling pin - use a pool noodle with or without a dowel through the hole



2. Roll therapy ball (or a medicine ball) over child – or child over therapy ball



3. lycra ghost bag



4. Swing in lycra swing

5. lying under heavy cushions, between mats, under a weighted blanket, bean bag chair



6. massage

7. Hot dog" game: child lies across end of a yoga mat and is rolled up in mat (head outside)– then give pressure to body as you add mustard, ketchup, relish, onions, etc.



8. Pizza game: roll padded rolling pin over body (rolling out dough); add sauce (use rolling pin again); add pepperoni (bean bags); add cheese (weighted blanket)

9. Mummy wrap – use theraband, stretchy fabric, tensor bandages to wrap body

10.

For further information regarding a specific child, please contact your occupational therapist