

The goal of the **Supporting and Enhancing NICU Sensory Experiences (SENSE)** intervention is to engage parents in consistently providing positive, developmentally appropriate sensory exposures to their high-risk infants in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) every day of hospitalization. This is so parents can feel empowered to positively influence the outcomes of their infant(s), as early parental experiences as well as early infant sensory exposures can have a life-long impact.

While parents are the best providers of the SENSE intervention, it is recognized that some NICUs may experience problems with engaging families. The timing of initiation of education is an important consideration, but some NICUs may choose to utilize a sensory support team to fill in the gaps when parents are not able to be present.

The SENSE intervention was developed over the course of a 4-5 year period. It includes specific doses and targeted timing (based on postmenstrual age, PMA) of evidence-based interventions such as skin-to-skin care, infant massage, auditory exposure, holding, and rocking. The guideline was developed with the intention of optimizing parent engagement, while maximizing daily positive sensory exposures to improve infant development and parent-infant interaction. The guideline contains specific amounts of tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, vestibular, visual and olfactory exposures to be conducted daily.

By taking the SENSE guideline and adapting it based on your hospital policies and unit culture, it is hoped that more parents can be empowered to engage with their infant(s) in the NICU and that more infants can benefit from daily positive sensory experiences during NICU hospitalization.

PEOPLE

SENSE Administrator:

- Therapist(s), nurse(s), and/or neonatologist(s)

Sensory Support Team:

- Trained volunteers, cuddlers, students

HOW SENSE WORKS

- The SENSE administrator engages parents early in hospitalization, provides the parent education booklet, and provides parent education
- The SENSE administrator determines if the defined guideline needs to be modified based on the individual needs of an infant
 - SENSE administrator does an infant assessment to determine if the infant can tolerate the positive exposures as outlined and makes modifications as needed
 - Assessments are repeated at least weekly by the SENSE administrator, but more often with changes in medical status
- Weekly education is conducted with parents by the SENSE administrator, outlining new positive sensory exposures with advancing age
 - Bedside materials are updated with each PMA
 - The sensory support team, overseen by the SENSE administrator, can fill in positive sensory exposures when parents cannot be present
 - Parents, health care professionals and the sensory support team can document positive sensory exposures on the bedside logs
 - Health care professionals support parents in meeting the defined doses of positive sensory exposures

Please use the following link to access detailed information about the intervention, as well as how to order 'at cost': <https://otm.wustl.edu/for-industry/tools/#SENSE>. The intervention is currently available to be ordered in print format, however an electronic version is forthcoming and should become available soon. Once ordered and received, the materials will allow you to have open permission to copy and distribute the parent education materials and log sheets at your hospital as you see fit.

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