

What is a weighted vest?

- A weighted vest has several pockets in which small weights are placed.
- It is worn over a student's regular clothing.
- It provides firm, gentle pressure to be used as a tool for calming (like a hug or squeeze).



What students would benefit from using a weighted vest?

- Students who have difficulty with self-regulation (which means the ability to adjust attention, thoughts, behaviours and emotions to meet the demands of a situation)
- Students who have difficulty maintaining attention and sitting still
- Students who demonstrate a need for deep pressure (difficulty with personal boundaries, frequently falling or crashing on purpose, seeking things to push, pull or climb, etc.)

What are the benefits of using a weighted vest?

- Promotes calmness
- Reduces restlessness
- Increases concentration and sustained attention
- Promotes body awareness (feeling where your body is in space)

Why do weighted vests work?

- The weight provides deep pressure input, similar to that of a hug.
- This deep pressure input called "proprioception" can have a soothing effect on a student's nervous system due to changes in the body's biochemistry resulting from this sensation.

How and when can a weighted vest be used?

- Vests should be used in consultation with an Occupational Therapist.
- Vests should be worn for short periods of time (approximately 15-20 minutes). After 20 minutes, the body accommodates to the deep pressure and the vest may no longer be effective.
- There should be at least an hour break between when the vest is reapplied.
- Vests can be worn during time periods that a student finds most challenging (sitting still, attending to lessons, seat work, transitions, etc.).
- Vests may be effective in helping a student calm down when worn during initial signs of increased agitation, however, they seldom work when the student is already upset.
- Vests should not be worn during strenuous activities (e.g. during gym class or recess) when deep pressure sensation can be achieved in other ways (e.g. pushing, pulling, jumping, climbing, and lifting).

Precautions:

- Vests are not recommended for children under 3 years old.
- The weight of a vest should never exceed 10% of the student's overall body weight.
- Discontinue use of a vest if adverse reactions are observed, such as crying, increased agitation, changes in breathing, colour change, atypical sweating or continually trying to remove it.
- Weighted vests should only be used when recommended by an Occupational Therapist who monitors its use and effectiveness.
- Ask your therapist for details or if a trial of a weighted vest might be appropriate.