



## MULTISENSORY STIMULATION IN 6 QUESTIONS

Multisensory stimulation includes all interventions aimed at stimulating two or more primary senses (vision, smell, touch, hearing, taste). These interventions provide people with adapted sensory experiences that promote well-being and enhance social interactions with others.

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### For whom and why?

**Multisensory stimulation is aimed** at all people with dementia, regardless of the stage of the disease.

This intervention is used to stimulate cognition (including memory, language and concentration), to promote well-being, to decrease anxiety and/or depression, to stimulate communication and to provide comfort.

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### What are the benefits?

**Observed effects** are a decrease in agitation, improvement in mood and stimulation of social interactions.

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### How is the intervention conducted?

**A multisensory stimulation session lasts between 45 and 60 minutes.**

Different programmes can be offered with specific equipment (bubble lamp, scent spray) or using everyday objects (perfumes, candles, etc.).

In group of 5 to 6 participants, a 6-week programme with one session per week can be conducted using sensory objects placed in a box on different themes such as childhood, holidays, etc. For each theme, 6 to 8 objects are selected according to the participants' preferences (favourite smell, favourite colour, etc.). Participants take turn in choosing an object and examining it by looking at it, touching it and smelling it and can, if they wish, describe it and say what the object evokes in them. The session ends when all the objects in the box have been handled.

In individual sessions, the same principle of themed sessions with objects can be used. Individual sessions can also be conducted in a dedicated room or in a room with specific equipment to help the person relax, stimulate their senses and express their emotions.



## 4 How does it work?

**Dementia is associated with age-related sensory changes** such as reduced vision and hearing. Sometimes people need more stimulation to better perceive the world around them, such as louder sounds or larger writing. Lack of appropriate sensory stimulation can lead to depression, anxiety, disorientation, agitation or apathy (indifference). To better perceive and feel one's environment helps to better understand it and to adapt behaviours accordingly.

Care should be taken to ensure that the environment is not overstimulating for people who may not be able to interpret all the information. This can increase agitation or anxiety.

## 5 When is it contraindicated?

**Multisensory stimulation including scented objects is not recommended** for people at risk of allergic reaction and/or skin irritation. The intervention is also not recommended for people who may experience overly negative emotions as a result of overstimulation of the senses or recollection of negative memories that cause distress.

**In all cases, it is necessary to discuss it beforehand with professionals.**

## 6 Who can provide multisensory stimulation?



**Multisensory stimulation is provided** by an occupational therapist, a psychologist, a psychomotor therapist, an artist, or by care staff and carers with knowledge and/or training in support of people with dementia. Good communication skills and knowledge of the participants are highly recommended (their background, hobbies, etc.).



**Do not forget your glasses and/or hearing aids if you need them.**



**Your participation in the sessions is free. You will always be asked if you wish to participate.**

This sheet is adapted from a chapter in the guide *Psychosocial interventions and dementia: understanding, knowing, implementing* which presents 10 psychosocial interventions.

