

# Eating should be a pleasure.

Eating should be the easiest, most natural thing in the world. Unfortunately for some children, it's really hard work. It may even be almost impossible.

If your baby or child has a condition that makes it difficult to swallow, chew or absorb nutrients — or if he has little interest in food — please call us. We help babies and children up to 18 years old develop the eating skills and behaviors they need to maximize their growth and development.



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#### PEDIATRIC THERAPY SERVICES

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PEDIATRIC FEEDING THERAPY

## Making Mealtimes Less of a Struggle



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Extraordinary care. Extraordinary caring.™

# Causes and signs of feeding problems

If mealtimes have become such a struggle that you dread them, then your child probably dreads them too. An evaluation by a professional therapist can help.

## For some children, medical conditions cause feeding problems. These conditions include:

- Prematurity or low birth weight
- Cleft lip or cleft palate
- Developmental delays
- Sensory difficulties
- Food allergies
- Breathing or airway problems
- Heart conditions
- Digestive tract issues, such as reflux
- Nerve and muscle disorders
- Torticollis (tight neck muscles)

## Signs of eating or feeding problems vary, but these are some you may notice:

- A delay in attaining feeding-related milestones
- A decrease in the amount of food your child eats
- Meals lasting longer than 30 minutes
- Coughing, choking or gagging during feedings or meal times
- Frequent respiratory infections

- Wet or gurgling vocal quality
- Difficulty coordinating sucking and swallowing with breathing
- Irritability between meals
- Refusal to eat or drink
- Negative behaviors related to feeding or meal times
- Difficulty transitioning from tube feeding to oral feeding
- Difficulty transitioning to solid and/or textured foods
- Difficulty transitioning from breastfeeding to bottle feeding
- Difficulty breastfeeding
- Wet respiration during meals

## When a baby or child has difficulty feeding or eating, he may:

- Lose weight
- Become dehydrated
- Be at risk of aspirating if food “goes down the wrong pipe”
- Have anxiety at mealtime and resist eating

# How therapy can help

At your child’s first visit to our clinic, we will talk with you to learn more about your child. We will review the child’s medical, developmental and feeding history. A speech language pathologist and/or an occupational therapist will observe your child during a feeding or meal situation. These therapists are experts in helping children overcome feeding issues.

The therapist may recommend a modified barium swallow study. This X-ray video shows how a child swallows various foods and liquids. It gives detailed information on how safely the child can eat and drink. It shows if any food or liquid is at risk of entering the child’s airway. This study is performed by a speech-language pathologist and a radiologist in the radiology clinic.

Once the evaluation is complete, we will design a therapy plan specifically to meet your child’s needs. Therapy sessions may address:

- Positioning/seating
- Food exploration
- Strength and coordination for eating or feeding
- Mealtime routines
- A feeding plan for home
- Caregiver education and support

If you’re concerned about your child’s ability to eat or drink, ask your doctor if a referral to Pediatric Feeding Therapy could help. Then call us for an appointment: 206-386-3592. We’d love to help your child enjoy meal times and get the nutrition he needs for a healthy mind and body.