



Common Feeding Therapy Techniques

Feeding therapists use a variety of evidence-based techniques to address different aspects of eating challenges. Here are some of the most common approaches:

Sensory Integration

This technique helps children get used to different food textures, temperatures, and flavors. It does this through gradual exposure and sensory play.

Sensory integration activities might include:

- Touching and playing with different foods
- Smelling various scents related to food
- Gradually introducing new textures through non-food items

Oral Motor Exercises

These exercises aim to strengthen and coordinate the muscles used for eating and swallowing.

Common oral motor exercises include:

- Blowing bubbles or whistles to strengthen lip muscles
- Tongue exercises to improve mobility and strength
- Chewing exercises using special tools or foods

Tongue exercises:

1. Lick lollipops up and down protruding the tongue outside the mouth.
2. Licking honey or yogurt from sides of the lips.
3. Tongue clicks and popping sounds.
4. Hold tongue elevated (3-6 seconds)
5. Hold tongue outside the mouth (3-6 seconds)
6. Touch tongue tip to nose.

NO teeth (make sure to always supervise to avoid choking):

- Use a training toothbrush to let your child practice munching
- Practice chewing with foods that dissolve such as baby wafers or baby rice crackers.
- Use a training toothbrush, your finger, or your child's finger to move food to the side of her mouth to practice chewing.
- Give long, thick strips of very chewy foods (e.g. crusty bread, or

HAS teeth and has developed some chewing skills:

- Cut soft foods into bite sized pieces.
- Help your child place pieces of the food into the side of their mouth, between the teeth, ready for chewing.
- Begin with soft chewy foods (e.g. cheese sticks or scrambled eggs) and then move to more difficult foods e.g. soft veggies, pasta and finely chopped meats).
- Start introducing chewy foods that your child likes and then gradually introduce new foods.
- Let your child watch other children eating chewy foods – children learn eating skills from other children.
- Offer food in a mesh bag (available in stores). Give the mesh feeder to your child at the front or side of the mouth for them to chew. This is a great way to

Behavioral Approaches

Behavioral techniques use positive reinforcement and routines. They aim to promote healthy eating and reduce bad mealtime habits.

Behavioral strategies may include:

- Rewarding positive eating behaviors
- Establishing consistent mealtime routines
- Gradually increasing expectations for trying new foods

"Get Permission" Approach

This child-led approach builds trust. It then introduces new foods at the child's pace.

Steps in the "Get Permission" approach might include:

1. Looking at new food
2. Touching the food
3. Smelling the food
4. Tasting a tiny amount
5. Eventually eating the food

Food Chaining

Food chaining involves slowly expanding a child's diet. It does this by gradually introducing new, similar foods that the child already accepts.

For example, if a child likes French fries, food chaining might progress as follows:

1. French fries
2. Sweet potato fries
3. Baked sweet potato wedges
4. Mashed sweet potato
5. Other orange vegetables like carrots or squash

Final Tips

Parents, you play a vital role in reinforcing feeding therapy techniques at home. Here are some strategies to support your child's progress:

- Create a positive mealtime environment

- Establish regular meal and snack times
- Minimize distractions during meals
- Make mealtimes fun and social

Implement feeding therapy recommendations

- Practice specific techniques as described above
- Use recommended utensils or adaptive equipment
- Follow food introduction plans consistently

Introduce new foods gradually

- Use the "one bite" rule without pressure
- Offer new foods alongside familiar favorites
- Involve your child in food preparation when appropriate

*Remember, progress in feeding therapy can take time. Have fun and celebrate small victories. Communicate with your PCP if questions or concerns arise.

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