PLAY & THRIVE SPEECH THERAPY

5 Signs Your Child May Benefit From Feeding Therapy

Mealtimes can be challenging - especially with young children. Picky eating is common, but sometimes feeding difficulties go beyond typical picky eating and begin to affect a child's nutrition, development, or the whole family's mealtime experience.

Here are 5 signs your child may benefit from feeding therapy:

1. Your child eats a very limited variety of foods

Does your child have a very small list of foods they will consistently eat? Maybe they are dropping foods they previously enjoyed without adding new foods to replace them, avoiding entire food groups, or becoming increasingly selective over time. Feeding therapy can help children gradually expand their food variety while building positive, low-pressure experiences with unfamiliar foods.

2. Mealtimes are long, stressful, or feel like a constant battle

If meals frequently involve crying, tantrums, refusal, bargaining, or significant stress for your child-or for you-it may be time for additional support. Mealtimes that regularly stretch on for long periods can also be a sign that eating is more difficult for your child than it should be. Feeding therapy isn't just about getting a child to eat more foods. An important goal is helping reduce stress around eating and make mealtimes feel more manageable for the whole family.

3. Your child has difficulty chewing or managing food

Eating requires a lot of coordination! Children need to learn how to bite, chew, move food around their mouth, and safely manage different textures. You may notice that your child has difficulty chewing, pockets food in their cheeks, spits out certain textures, takes a long time to finish bites, or has difficulty progressing from purees to more advanced textures. Feeding therapy can target the oral-motor skills needed to safely and efficiently manage a variety of foods and textures.

4. Your child is extremely sensitive to textures, smells, temperatures, or how foods are presented

Does your child only accept crunchy foods? Refuse anything wet or mixed? Do they insist on a particular brand, shape, temperature, or presentation? For some children, eating can be overwhelming from a sensory perspective. Feeding therapy can provide opportunities to explore foods through looking, touching, smelling, playing, and eventually tasting-without immediately expecting the child to eat the food.

5. Self-feeding is difficult

Learning to feed yourself is an important developmental skill. Depending on your child's age, you may notice difficulty bringing food to their mouth, using utensils, drinking from an open cup or straw, or becoming more independent during meals.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's feeding skills, reach out to your clinician. We're happy to discuss whether a feeding evaluation or feeding therapy may be a good next step for your family.