

Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

Pediatric Dysphagia

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If children have difficulty swallowing food or liquids, they may be suffering from pediatric dysphagia. This means they are struggling with passing food or liquids from the mouth, into the throat, and through the esophagus and stomach during the swallowing process. Approximately 25%-45% of typically developing children demonstrate feeding and swallowing problems and that prevalence is increasing due to improved survival rates of children born prematurely.



Some Signs of Dysphagia:



- Eating slowly
- Swallowing a single mouthful several times
- Difficulty coordinating sucking and swallowing



- Gagging and/or choking during swallowing
- Drooling



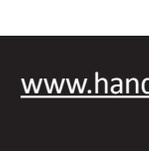
- Stiffening or arching their bodies during feedings



- Coughing while eating or drinking
- Wet or raspy sounding voice while eating or drinking



- Spitting up or vomiting



- Weight loss
- Fever during or after eating
- Watery nose or eyes during or after feeding

- Vomiting during or after eating
- Chronic respiratory illnesses

Some Causes of Dysphagia:



- Cleft lip or palate
- Dental problems
- Abnormally large tongue or tonsils
- Tumors or masses in the throat



- Developmental disabilities
- Neurological disorders
- Medication side effects



- Sensory issues
- Behavioral factors
- Social, emotional, and/or environmental factors



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(cont.)

Some Treatment Options for Dysphagia:



- Behavioral interventions
- Postural/positioning techniques
- Diet modification



- Equipment/utensils
- Biofeedback
- Oral-motor treatments
- Pacing and cue-based feeding strategies



- Prosthetics/appliances
- Sensory stimulation
- Tube feeding

If you suspect your child might have pediatric dysphagia, it is important to receive an assessment from a qualified speech-language pathologist (SLP) as soon as possible. They will be able to determine not only if your child is having difficulty with swallowing but also how to treat him/her in order for them to receive the proper amount of nutrition for survival.



Resources:

Pediatric Dysphagia. Retrieved December 15, 2017, from Speech-Language Hearing Association website:
<http://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589934965§ion=Treatment>

Pediatric Dysphagia. Retrieved December 15, 2017, from Children's National Health System website:
<https://childrensnational.org/choose-childrens/conditions-and-treatments/stomach-digestion-gi/dysphagia>

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