

Feeding Therapy

Feeding therapy at Pediatric GI is centered on the child's unique feeding needs. We address feeding difficulties in children from birth to early adulthood. We have found that a multidisciplinary approach, which includes all members of a child's medical and support team, is the best way to address feeding difficulties.

What we help with

Picky Eaters

- Decreased range or variety of foods; typically has 30 or more foods in their Food Range
- Foods lost due to "burn out" from Food Jaggging are usually eaten again after a 2-week break
- Eats at least one food from most all nutrition or texture groups (e.g. purees, meltable foods, proteins, fruits)
- Can tolerate New Foods on their plate; usually able to touch or taste food (even if reluctant)
- Frequently eats a different set of foods at a meal than other family members; (typically eats at the same time and at the same table as other family members)
- Sometimes reported by parent as a "picky eater" at well-child check-ups
- Learns to eat New Foods in 20-25 steps on a Steps to Eating Hierarchy

Problem Feeders

- Restricted range or variety of foods usually eats less than 20 foods
- Foods lost due to "burn out" from Food Jaggging are not eaten again after a break, resulting in a further decrease in the # of foods eaten
- Refuses entire categories of food textures or nutrition groups (e.g. soft cubes, meats, vegetables, hard mechanicals)

- Cries, screams, tantrums, “falls apart” new foods are presented; complete refusal
- Persistently reported by parents to be a “picky eater” at multiple well-child check-ups
- Requires more than 25 steps to learn to eat new foods

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Treatments we offer

Pediatric GI primarily uses the SOS Approach to Feeding, which integrates sensory, motor, oral behavioral/learning, medical and nutritional factors to assess and treat children and provide support to their families.

When to come to us:

- Ongoing poor weight gain (rate re percentiles falling) or weight loss
- Ongoing choking, gagging, or coughing during meals
- Ongoing problems with vomiting
- More than one incident of nasal reflux
- History of a traumatic choking incident
- History of eating and breathing coordination problems, with ongoing respiratory issues
- Parents reporting child as being “picky” at two or more well-child checks
- difficulties latching well and/or consistently to the breast or bottle
- Inability to transition to baby food purees by 10 months of age
- Inability to accept table food solids by 12 months of age
- Inability to transition from breast/bottle to a cup by 16 months of age
- Has not weaned off baby foods by 16 months of age

- Aversion or avoidance of all foods in specific texture or nutrition group
- Food range of fewer than 20 foods, especially if foods are being dropped over time with no new foods replacing those lost
- An infant who cries and/or arches at most meals
- An infant who refuses the bottle
- Family is fighting about food and feeding (ie. meals are a battle)
- The parent repeatedly reports that the child is difficult for everyone to feed
- Assistance with transitioning children off G-tube feeding

What to expect

Our specially trained trans-disciplinary feeding team conducts several types of feeding assessments, which are used to evaluate infants, children, and adolescents with feeding, weight, and growth difficulties.

Assessment makes sure that all physical and sensory reasons for atypical feeding development are examined and thus can be appropriately treated (including medical issues). In addition, skills across all developmental areas are assessed as they relate to feeding.

After the assessment process and based on the results, we provide feeding therapy using the SOS Approach to Feeding model. The SOS Approach to Feeding is a Play-Based program. It teaches children to learn how to eat at a pace that respects their readiness to progress through learning the 32 different steps involved in the task of eating. We teach the children the skills they need in order to eat a wide variety of food types and textures using the natural, social reinforcement of playing with the food and interacting with adults.

For infants and toddlers, the SOS Approach to Feeding also uses developmental strategies and social engagement with parents to help the baby eat and grow better.