

ABILITIESUNLIMITED LLC

Feeding Challenges in Children

Understanding & Treating Feeding Difficulties in Children

Happy New Year

Feeding challenges among children can be a daunting experience for the entire family. Families may be unable to dine out, may have to eat a limited variety of foods, or may have to cook two different meals. Many children with Autism and Related Disorders experience problems related to food intake. Feeding problems can lead to further difficulties such as poor fine motor functioning, g-tube insertion, malnutrition and, in extreme cases, death. Some children do not eat an adequate amount of food and others do not eat an adequate variety of foods. For instance, many children with Autism limit their diets to French fries, chicken nuggets, fried chicken, and pizza.

A child's feeding problem may have originated from a medical condition before or during birth. However, many children continue to have aversive reactions to foods long after the medical problem has been corrected. Often children may experience choking, gagging, vomiting and loss of breathing during feeding time. These events can be traumatic and are very stressful on the family.

Families desperately want to intervene. However, it is difficult to assess professionals who have the skills to address feeding issues. Fortunately, behavioral analysts have a wealth of research and techniques to address feeding delays. Moreover, the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) based interventions are practical and easy to implement. In addition, ABA feeding interventions work in a relatively short time.



Behavioral Feeding Therapy

Behavioral feeding therapy addresses problems that are due to both an inability to tolerate foods and/or outright food refusal. Behavior therapy uses a variety of techniques such as positive reinforcement, escape extinction, and skills training. The techniques employed are based on the function of the behavior, the child's preference, and the specified needs of the family.

What's Next

1. **If your child has feeding difficulties talk to your medical doctor and request testing for medical issues such as gastrointestinal problems and food allergies.**
2. **If the medical examination determines that it is safe for your child to eat then you can go ahead and contact a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.**

Children may not eat certain foods because it hurts or they may be afraid that it will hurt

Beverly Dabrio, MA, BCBA

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