

# The Need to Feed

## Helping Children with Feeding Challenges



### **A HEALTHY DIET IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL CHILDREN**

Feeding challenges in children with special needs are common. These challenges can make mealtime very demanding. Parents may have to cook two separate meals or having to prepare the same meal every day. Because of feeding problems some families cannot sit down to a family meal at the table or take their child to dine out at a restaurant.

Children with feeding difficulties may experience choking, gagging, vomiting, stomach aches, and shortness of breath. Feeding challenges in children usually begins with a medical condition such as prematurity, allergy, and reflux. Overtime, children begin to associate eating as a negative event which leads to picky eating or food refusal. For these children and their families feeding has become a stressful event.

A child who experiences feeding issues may lose skills that are associated with feeding, become dependent on G-tube feeding, eating only unhealthy preferred foods, not drinking enough water, or become malnutrition and failure-to-thrive. In rare cases, feeding challenges have resulted in death.

### **What Can A Parent Do**

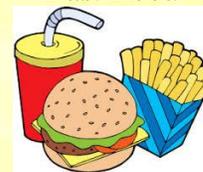
Talk to your child's doctor and find out if your child has a medical problem that is impeding his ability to eat. Ask your doctor to conduct the necessary medical tests for feeding problems such as a Barium swallowing test and a gastric emptying test. Next, you will want to contact a behavior analyst. Applied Behavior Analysis has the most effective techniques to address feeding challenges. The treatment process is usually short.

If you do not have a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) on your team then you can contact us. We work with the family, and other professionals, to design a plan that is respectful of your child's personal preferences and ability. We conduct a thorough evaluation including medical clearance, functional assessment, food preference inventory, and reinforcement preference assessment.

### *Preferred Foods Usually Includes*

<i>French Fries</i>	<i>Chicken Nuggets</i>	<i>Pizza</i>
<i>Potato Chips</i>	<i>Fish Sticks</i>	<i>Hot Dogs</i>
<i>Fried Chicken</i>		<i>Junk Food</i>

### *Fast Food*



**Feeding challenges includes refusing to eat or drink, eating a small quantity of food, eating and/or drinking a limited variety of foods.**

### ***Eating only preferred foods is a Feeding Problem***

*Written by Beverly Dabrio, MA, BCBA*

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