

Feeding and Swallowing Disorders

Spotlight on: Infants



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Better Hearing & Speech Month

Eating is a complex biological process. Although it comes naturally to most babies, some may have trouble feeding from breast or bottle. In some cases, this is because of a swallowing disorder (called *dysphagia*).

Did You Know? NICU and Beyond

Premature babies often have trouble swallowing. The ability to successfully swallow and feed is a key milestone for babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Full-term babies can also have swallowing problems.

Signs of Trouble

Babies may show the following signs of trouble:

- Arch their back or stiffen when feeding
- Cry or fuss when feeding
- Fall asleep when feeding
- Have trouble breathing while feeding
- Take a long time to feed (longer than 30 minutes)
- Spit up or throw up a lot

Causes

Reflux, cerebral palsy, cleft lip and/or palate, and heart disease are just some of the causes.

Treatment

Talk to your baby's doctor if you have concerns. Special tests can identify the problem. If a baby is having trouble swallowing, treatment can help. Swallowing disorders can lead to low weight, poor nutrition, dehydration, and other health problems. **Treatment allows babies to grow and thrive!**

A feeding team may treat your child. The team may include a speech-language pathologist, dietician, lactation consultant, occupational therapist, and others. Speech-language pathologists can help in these ways:

- Help babies learn how to breathe while sucking and swallowing.
- Help babies learn how to drink from a bottle.
- Help parents change the way they hold their baby when eating.



Speech-language pathologists can help!

Learn more at www.asha.org/public.



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