

# Oral Motor and Feeding Challenges?

## Occupational Therapy Can Help!



Feeding challenges in infants and children are often secondary to unidentified factors including, but not limited to, low muscle tone and strength of the oral motor structures, sensory processing deficits, poor motor planning, and occasional medical issues. The longer a child's feeding difficulties persist without intervention, the more likely that behaviors will set in, causing nutritional deficiencies and further complications as the child ages.

At **The Children's Therapy & Learning Center**, we use a variety of developmental, sensory, and muscle-based oral motor techniques that help infants and children improve their ability to eat and accept a variety of foods into their diets. Oral Motor / Feeding Therapy is conducted in a playful manner to increase a child's comfort and willingness to explore and manage more foods, and improve their sensory tolerance as well.

### Possible signs a child may need Occupational Therapy:

#### 0-6 Months:

- Has difficulty maintaining a strong, consistent latch onto the nipple (a clicking sound may be heard)
- Experiences coughing, reflux or vomiting during or after feeding
- Loses a lot of liquid from their mouth while sucking
- Takes longer than one-half hour to drink a bottle
- Seems disinterested in eating or tries to avoid or escape the nipple
- Does not maintain consistent weight gain in comparison to their height



#### 6-12 Months:

- Has difficulty transitioning to solid foods
- Gags in attempts to try new foods
- Spits out food or turns away when food is presented
- Shows signs of stress and becomes upset at meal times
- Has a limited variety of foods in their diet
- Does not attempt to feed self

#### 1 Year – 4 Years:

- Gags at the sight of food or has an extreme aversion to certain textures
- Does not eat a variety of table-based foods with the rest of the family
- Does not seem to feel the food in their mouth and / or forgets to chew
- Is a 'picky' or 'messy' eater
- Highly dislikes teeth-brushing
- Has difficulty sitting at the table for mealtimes

If you are concerned about a child's Oral Motor / Feeding Development in any way, we encourage the child to receive a comprehensive assessment from a Licensed Occupational Therapist with specific experience in *Feeding & Swallowing Disorders*.

Research shows that the earlier a child's difficulties are identified—and he or she begins therapeutic intervention—the *greater* the success!

