

HOW TO ASSESS YOUR CHILD'S MOUTH FUNCTION

Take the first step to overcome picky eating!



Mary Voogt, NTP

Just Take A Bite

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this book is for informational and entertainment purposes only. I am not a doctor. Any health advice that I give is my opinion based on my general experience and knowledge, but not specific to you. Always seek the advice of your own health professionals before acting on something that I have published or recommended.

By reading this document, you agree that my company and myself are not responsible for your health or the health of your dependents. Any statements or claims about the possible health benefits conferred by any foods or supplements have not been evaluated by the Food & Drug Administration and are therefore not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

Please note that although many of the outbound links here and on my website are purely for informational purposes, I do earn a small commission on many such links including links to books and products, or may have a business relationship with the companies which provide them. My thoughts and opinions are my own and not of those of any sponsor or advertiser.

Copyright © 2020, Mary Voogt, NTP, Just Take A Bite LLC, and <https://justtakeabite.com>

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced in any form, except brief excerpts for the purpose of review, without written permission of the author. Permission can be requested by sending an e-mail to: mary@justtakeabite.com

How to Assess Your Child's Mouth Function

The first step in overcoming any feeding challenge is to assess your child's mouth function. If the mechanics aren't working properly, no amount of food tactics will work.

In this easy-to-use assessment you'll find four of the most common causes of mechanical mouth problems. Use the symptom checklist to figure out which one your child may be struggling with. The more symptoms are present, the more likely your child could have trouble in that area.

Each section also gives a list of the best doctors, therapists, and/or specialists to see for assessment and for treatment.

There will be some overlap among the four conditions. Use all of the symptoms and assessment recommendations to find the right path forward for your child.

You will notice that Nutritional Therapy is listed as an option in some cases. This is because a child's diet will impact their gut health and in turn their neurological function.

Whether you are dealing with a neurological disorder or you have ruled out any mechanical dysfunction, Nutritional Therapy is a great next step towards helping your child lose the picky eating status and truly thrive! I can't wait to serve you and your family.



Learn more about
Nutritional Therapy



Could your child have...

Oral Sensory Processing Disorder

What is it?

Some children struggle with processing and responding to the oral sensory information they encounter in everyday life. They shy away from stimulation since they are hyper-aware of the sensations. It is the most obvious with refusal to chew, eat, etc.

Other children experience decreased sensitivity to oral sensory input. In this case they crave stimulation. They may eat pretty well, but always be stuffing as much food in the mouth as possible. They tend to chew on things (non-food items like clothes, toys and his hands).

Common Symptoms

Check all that apply to your child.

- won't use utensils/eats with hands
- won't stay in chair during a meal
- puts more food in mouth than fits
- chews with mouth open
- chews on toys and clothes, bites others, sucks thumb
- chews with front teeth
- holds food in mouth for extended periods
- will only eat certain textures, sizes, shapes, or colors of food
- gags on food easily, chokes, drools
- refuses to try new foods
- fear of eating
- pushes food forward with tongue instead of back
- bothered by wet clothing
- bothered by certain clothing textures
- makes humming, buzzing, or clicking noises

Who can help?

Assessment:

- speech therapist
- occupational therapist
- functional neurologist

Therapy:

- speech therapist
- occupational therapist
- craniosacral therapist
- functional neurologist
- nutritional therapy practitioner

Could your child have...

Tongue and/or Lip Tie

What is it?

A tongue tie is when the band connecting the tongue to the bottom of the mouth is too tight, too thick, or both. It restricts the tongue's range of motion and can interfere with breastfeeding, chewing, speech, and overall body movement.

A lip tie is when the piece of muscleless tissue connecting the upper lip to the upper gum restricts the mouth's mobility because it's too thick, too tight, or both.

It is most common for a child to have both.

Common Symptoms

Check all that apply to your child.

- trouble latching to the breast/sliding off nipple
- constant hunger in infants
- colic/reflux/excessive gas
- unexplained fussiness in infants
- slow weight gain or lack of weight gain
- mother has sore nipples, cracked/bleeding nipples, decreased milk supply
- prolonged feeding sessions
- refusal to breastfeed or eat solids
- fall asleep often while breastfeeding
- clicking noise while breastfeeding
- delayed speech/can't make certain sounds/lisp
- food/texture aversions, picky eating
- gagging or choking on food, holding food in mouth
- poor posture/slump forward, headaches, neck pain
- poor/restless sleep, mouth breather and/or grinds teeth at night
- body tension, head turned to one side, flat head
- gap between front teeth, frequent cavities

Who can help?

Assessment:

- speech therapist
- pediatric dentist
- lactation consultant

Therapy:

- pediatric dentist (revision)
- craniosacral therapist (body work)

Could your child have...

Neurological Dysfunction

What is it?

Neurological dysfunction is a broad term for any inhibited brain function. This can include conditions like autism, ADHD, and parkinson's. But it can also include lesser disturbances that do not qualify as a named disorder.

There is a huge connection between the brain and the gut. If digestive function is impaired, it will impact neurological function. Eating habits are often impacted by neurological dysfunction.

Common Symptoms

Check all that apply to your child.

- lack of focus (ADD)
- hyperactivity (ADHD)
- lack of coordination
- trips over feet often/does not walk straight
- delayed speech
- autistic tendencies
- lack of social awareness
- one side of the body weaker than the other/imbalance
- difficulty chewing
- bothered by certain textures
- difficulty expressing emotions appropriately for age level
- does not participate in play with other children
- unaware of surroundings/"in another world"

Who can help?

Assessment:

- functional neurologist
- psychologist
- pediatrician

Therapy:

- functional neurologist
- psychologist
- nutritional therapy practitioner

Could your child have...

Narrow Palate

What is it?

A narrow palate occurs when the mouth does not develop properly. The narrow width does not allow the tongue to touch the top of the mouth. This lack of stimulation to the roof of the mouth can cause a variety of feeding challenges, beginning with breastfeeding.

If not corrected, a narrow palate can interfere with facial development, speech, and eating.

Common Symptoms

Check all that apply to your child.

- mouth breathing at night
- poor sleep
- snoring
- mouth hangs open often during the day
- speaking without lips touching
- narrow face
- lower jaw receding/upper jaw protruding
- permanent teeth can't come in due to lack of space and mouth shape
- crooked teeth
- environmental allergies
- frequent stuffy nose/sneezing
- frequent ear infections
- thumb sucking or extended pacifier use

Who can help?

Assessment:

- pediatric dentist
- speech therapist
- allergist

Therapy:

- pediatric dentist
- orthodontist
- allergist

After reading through all four of the common mechanical/neurological mouth problems and observing your child, check all of the symptoms that apply.

When you have finished, count the symptoms from each section and enter them below.

Oral SPD: __ / 15

TT/LT: __ / 17

Neuro Dys: __ / 13

Narrow P: __ / 13

The condition with the highest observed symptom : total symptom ratio is the condition to focus on first.

Use the "*who can help*" section to find a local therapist/doctor to assess your child. From there you can seek out the proper therapy.

You will notice that Nutritional Therapy is listed as an option in some cases. This is because a child's diet and lifestyle will impact his or her gut health and in turn his or her neurological function.

So whether you are dealing with a neurological disorder or you have ruled out any mechanical dysfunction, Nutritional Therapy is a great next step towards helping your child lose the picky eating status and truly thrive! I can't wait to serve you and your family.

Mary Voogt, NTP
Just Take A Bite



*Learn more about
Nutritional Therapy*

