

Oral Skill Development

Strategies may be useful to help develop awareness of the mouth, increase ability to feed, and in preparation for teeth brushing. Involvement from speech and language therapy may also be indicated.

Mouthing is a normal developmental stage for young children so they can learn to interpret and interact with things in their environment and explore textures and tastes of objects. These behaviours decrease as children's motor skills develop. In children with delayed development mouthing may continue longer than in a typically developing child.

Oral Activities:

- Massage around the face and jaw using firm touch of fingers or a flannel
- Provide circular movements around the cheeks and work towards the lips.
- Massage around the lips.
- Squashing and squeezing cheeks and pouted lips
- Pull funny faces in the mirror
- Play bite and tug with a soft cloth or flannel.
- Blow up a balloon and direct slow release of air onto cheeks and face
- Blowing bubbles, whistles, windmills, feathers and mouth toys.
- Apply vibrating toothbrush or vibrating toy to cheeks, chin and jaw area.
- Battery tooth brush or finger toothbrush for mouth care
- Drinking thick liquids e.g. milkshakes/smoothies through a narrow or bendy straw for resisted sucking.
- Drinking from a sports bottle,
- Chewing toys to increase tactile input in the oral area e.g. chewy tube, bracelet and other wearable items
- Increase chewy and crunchy food in diet e.g. bagels, pop corn, bread sticks, carrots, dried fruits, fruit chews, celery, apples,
- Chewing sugar free gum for older children.

Helpful Resources

- Finger toothbrush – Mothercare, John Lewis, Boots or similar
- Soft chewable toothbrush – Boots
- Chewable toothbrush – Fuzzybrush. Lloyd pharmacy, Amazon
- Electric toothbrush with small head - from Amazon, Boots, Tesco, etc
- Timer toothbrush with light – Superdrug or similar
- Chewy Tubes and Chew buddy - www.sensorydirect.com or similar