

Tongue Thrust Disorder

What is a tongue thrust disorder?

A tongue thrust is when the tongue pushes against or between the teeth while your child is at rest, swallowing, or talking. Speech therapists call this an **orofacial** [or-oh-FAY-shuhl] **myofunctional** [my-oh-FUNK-shen-uhl] disorder, or **OMD**.

Most infants push their tongues forward to swallow. However, most children swallow normally by 6 years old. If they don't, the tongue pushes against the teeth as the child swallows.

What causes a tongue thrust disorder?

Speech therapists think a tongue thrust may happen because of:

- Blocked nasal passages causing your child to breathe out of their mouth
- Sucking and chewing habits like thumb and finger sucking or nail or cheek biting
- Physical or structural lip, tongue, cheek, or jaw differences
- Trouble keeping the lips together
- Nerve or development trouble
- A family history of tongue thrust disorder

What are the signs of a tongue thrust disorder?

Signs of a tongue thrust disorder may include:

- High palate (roof of the mouth)
- Speech problems
- Tongue resting in the wrong position
- Open lips when resting
- A prolonged sucking habit
- Problems chewing or swallowing food
- Having or needing orthodontic treatment



How is tongue thrust disorder treated?

A tongue thrust disorder can cause swallowing, dental, and speech problems and is hard to change without help from a professional. Your child can begin working with a speech therapist when they are 8 years old. They must stop sucking their fingers before beginning treatment.

The speech therapist will evaluate your child and work with you to set up a treatment plan. Usually, they will have nine 1-hour sessions every week or every other week. After that, they will have two 30-minute follow-up sessions over the next 3 to 4 months. Your child will learn:

- The correct way to rest the mouth and tongue
- How to swallow saliva, liquids, and solid foods correctly
- Correct tongue placement for speech

The speech therapist will also give your child activities and exercises each week to complete at home. To make sure your child's treatments are successful, help them do the exercises consistently at home.

