Let's Talk ABOUT...

When a child or baby cannot eat or drink, or cannot eat and drink enough of the right things to stay healthy, they may have a feeding disorder. The child may be losing weight or having trouble gaining the right amount of weight for his age. With treatment, eating can become a safer, easier and more pleasurable experience for the child and the family. Treatment can also help a child to be healthier.

What causes feeding disorders?

Feeding disorders in children are almost always caused by some other medical problem. Some of the medical problems that cause feeding disorders include:

- Gastroesophageal reflux (GAS-trow-es-off-a-GEE-all REE-flucks)
- Problems with the stomach or intestines
- Seizures
- Problems with the nervous system
- Having been a preterm infant
- Sensory system problems
- Autism
- Craniofacial syndromes
- Problems with the heart or lungs
- Problems with the muscles in and around the mouth

What are the signs that my child may have a feeding disorder?

- Not gaining weight well
- Coughing, choking, or gagging when he eats or drinks
- Frequent throwing up
- An event of choking on food or drink which caused him to stop eating
- Eating and breathing coordination problems

Feeding disorder

- Failure to eat baby-food purees by 10 months of age
- Failure to eat table foods by 12 months of age
- Failure to use a cup by 16 months of age
- Still eating baby foods at 16 months of age
- The avoidance of foods with a certain texture or a certain food group
- Taking fewer than 20 kinds of food, especially if he stops eating certain foods and doesn't start replacing them with other foods
- Crying or arching at most meals
- Your family has arguments about food and feeding
- Everyone has difficultty feeding your child
- One of the child's parents has or used to have eating difficulties and your child is not gaining weight appropriately

How will my child be evaluated?

Your child will have a Clinical Feeding Evaluation. This will take place at a therapy center. The feeding specialist will talk with you about the foods your child eats, where and when he eats, and who feeds him. The therapist will look at your child's mouth and face and watch your child eat or be fed. By watching your child eat, the specialist can learn how your child moves his mouth, his thinking ability during eating, how he controls his body, and his general ability to eat. If the therapist thinks your child may not be swallowing safely, he will be scheduled for another evaluation.

How are feeding disorders treated?

After the feeding evaluations, you may receive recommendations to treat your child. Some of the methods may be the following:

- Putting your child in certain safe eating and drinking positions.
- Giving your child certain drinks and foods that are safe for them.

- Helping your child to eat a wider variety of drinks and foods.
- Teaching you and your child safe feeding and drinking skills.
- Receiving help to coordinate services with other medical and therapy professionals.

Questions?

If you are concerned that your child has a feeding disorder please call for an appointment at with an Intermountain Pediatric Rehabilitation Clinical Feeding Specialist at one of the Outpatient Rehabilitation Department sites:

- Cache Kids Pediatric Rehab (Logan, Utah) 435.755.8300
- PCMC Rehab Ogden 801-387-2080
- PCMC Rehab Bountiful 801.292.8665
- PCMC Rehab Sandy 801-571-3081
- PCMC Rehab Taylorsville 801-840-4360
- Orem Community Hospital Pediatric Rehab Center 801.714.3505
- Dixie Regional Medical Center Pediatric Rehab

(St George, Utah) 435.251.2250



Pediatric Education Services 801.662.3500 Rev. 09/08

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