Let's Talk About...

Feeding disorder/difficulty

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 (often called feeding difficulties), 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)
- **Eosinophilic Esophagitis** (EE-oh-sin-oh-fil-ik EE-sof-a-jie-tis)
- Other Problems with the stomach or intestines
- Seizures
- Problems with the nervous system
- Being born prematurely
- Sensory system problems
- Autism
- Craniofacial syndromes
- Problems with the heart or lungs
- Problems with the muscles in and around the mouth
- Problems swallowing certain kinds of liquids and food textures

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 when he choked on food or drink that caused him to stop eating
- Eating and breathing coordination problems during or after eating
- Failure to eat baby-food purees by eight 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
- avoiding foods with a certain texture or a certain food group (such as avoiding most fruits/vegetables)
- 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 difficulty feeding your child
- Taking longer than 30 minutes to eat meals, on a regular basis.
- One of your 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 (either a Speech-Language Pathologist or an Occupational Therapist) 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.
- Obtaining 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:

- **Primary Children's Rehab Bountiful**
  280 North Main Street, 2nd Floor
  Bountiful, UT 8401

  Phone: 801.292.8665
- **Primary Children's Rehab Ogden**
  3903 Harrison Blvd, 4th Floor
  Ogden, UT 84403

  Phone: 801.387.2080
- **Primary Children's Rehab Sandy**
  870 East 9400 South, Suite 112
  Sandy, UT 84094

  Phone: 801.571.3081
- **Primary Children's Rehab Taylorsville**
  3845 W 4700 South, 2nd Floor
  Taylorsville, UT 84118

  Phone: 801.840.4360
- **Pediatric Rehabilitation at Orem Community Hospital**
  527 W 400 North
  Orem, UT 84057

  Phone: 801.714.3505

  Orem has additional satellite clinics with physical therapy services in:

  Saratoga Springs: 250 East SR 73
  Spanish Fork: 820 Expressway Lane
- **Pediatric Rehabilitation at Logan Regional Medical Center**
  550 East 1400 North, Suite W
  Logan, UT 84341

  435.716.6440
- **Pediatric Rehabilitation at Dixie Regional Medical Center**
  652 S Medical Center Drive
  St George, UT 84790
  (Located on the lower level of the Health and Performance Center)

  435.251.2250

Intermountain Primary Children's Medical Center
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