



Feeding & Swallowing Program at The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh

Eating is an essential element of our everyday lives. The Feeding & Swallowing Program at The Children's Institute provides outpatient evaluation and treatment for children with mild to severe feeding concerns from birth through 21 years of age. This includes children with extensive medical complexities who have feeding disorders as well as restrictive eating, which puts children at risk for serious health and growth concerns.

A positive treatment approach is utilized, allowing children to develop a more positive experience with food.



Who Can Benefit:

The Children's Institute's Feeding & Swallowing Program addresses different types of feeding-related problems. Treatment can help children who exhibit symptoms such as:

- **delays in oral motor skills**, such as being unable to suck (drink) from a bottle or chew
- **restricted eating** due to sensory, motor or experiential problems (challenges)
- feeding disorders associated with medical conditions, ranging in severity and cause from **gastroesophageal reflux to organ transplantation**
- swallowing disorders
- feeding disorders associated with **developmental disorders such as autism**
- significant social or **behavioral problems** that impact eating
- those ready for the transition from IV or tube feeding to **eating by mouth**
- **delays** in increasing variety and volume of foods

How our Team Can Help

We teach every family a variety of techniques and skills to help them manage their child's eating in a step-by-step process. Family involvement and training is critical to treatment success. Prior to evaluation, the family is required to complete a Feeding Case History, which is reviewed and used by the team during each child's evaluation. If needed, a video fluoroscopy swallow study may be scheduled. Each family is encouraged to actively participate in their child's therapy sessions and instructed on how to carry over treatment programs to the home. Family support continues through discharge planning, outpatient consultation and follow-up care. The team members may also collaborate with each child's support services, including school therapists, teachers, home nurses, early intervention and/or wrap-around service providers.

Our team may include:

- Medical staff
- Speech/language pathologist
- Clinical dietitian
- Occupational therapist
- Psychologist and/or Behavior Therapist

Potential Goals

Our team will establish individualized goals for each child receiving treatment. These may include:

- gain weight and grow
- accept food and drinks by mouth
- increase the variety, volume and textures of foods eaten
- learn to chew and manage a bite of food
- improve the safety of his or her swallow
- drink from a bottle or a cup
- acquire or improve self-feeding skills
- decrease or eliminate tube feedings/TPN
- decrease mealtime stress, anxiety and negative behaviors
- improve enjoyment of mealtimes with the parent, family and/or caregiver

Our Treatment Options

In order to determine the best treatment for each child, he or she will be evaluated by the functional feeding team. Based on results of the initial evaluation, the best course of treatment will be determined for each child. The two types of treatment that a child may be referred to include outpatient and outpatient intensity.

More information about our different treatment options can be found at amazingkids.org.

Our Philosophy

Our feeding program uses positive methods to facilitate the child to be an active eater. As therapists, we need to respect that a child has the right to refuse to eat. Our job is to build trust, develop skills, establish routine and find a therapeutic method in which the child is motivated to eat what we're offering them. Aversive methods are not used except in highly unique circumstances.

Why Choose The Children's Institute?

The Children's Institute is the region's most comprehensive program for the treatment of feeding and swallowing disorders. We combine the latest technology with patient-centered care and family involvement every step of the way. Our highly experienced team is able to identify each unique characteristic of the patient's particular disorder, and treat it successfully. The Children's Institute has a proven record of setting and meeting goals. With our attentiveness to every patient's needs, coupled with world-class care, the Feeding and Swallowing program will ensure success with your child.