Incorporating Therapy Into Mealtimes

By

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About Me

-Mom, wife and OT.
-Works for Kalamazoo RESA, FIT program (in 6th school year).
-Birth to 3 Special education pgm.
-Graduated from WMU in 2001, Go Broncos!
Goals for the Session

1. Have fun and discover something new!

2. Learn how oral sensory and oral motor delays can impact eating.

3. Gain strategies to address and improve these delays.

4. Collect resources, handouts and ideas to add to your “toolbox” to use at home.
Before we begin, some considerations

1. “Lay of the land” varies from ISD/RESA to another.

2. The child may already be receiving outpatient OT services.

3. The child may need you to suggest to their parent that they ask pediatrician for an outpatient OT referral.

4. **Educational** vs. **Medical** models- (birth to 3) our job is to help the parent incorporate strategies at home!

5. Where will the impact be made? 1 meal vs 21 meals and 14 snacks.

6. “We present skills to learn, **snacks** are for ‘therapy’ and practice, **meals** are for carry-over (with a jump start from parent)”- Lori Overland.
Sensory Integration and the mouth, in 15 minutes!

• Review of sensory systems
• The “other” senses- vestibular, proprioceptive
• Sensory integration-
• Sensory dysfunction-
  — Hyposensitivity to environment: Low responses to stimuli
  — Hypersensitivity to environment: High responses to stimuli
• Importance of environment- lighting, noise, social. Can it be modified during meal-time?
• **Sensory Integration** - Our system’s ability to take in everything that comes at us from our environment and process it, so we can react appropriately.

• **Sensory Dysfunction** - When we respond inappropriately to one or more things that come at us, because our system can’t process them.
How to improve sensory processing

• Food log- ask about daily activities, have parent complete a 5 day baseline diet.

• Food Chaining:

• Sometimes... Body first, then mouth (sensory tubs, messy play, brushing program, swinging, deep pressure).

• Sensory massage. TMJ to lips, downward strokes. Use bare hands first, then try different textures- lotion, fuzzy, silky, rough, bumpy.
Sensory Food Groups

• Depending on age, different foods can provide an array of sensory experiences.

• Textures:
  — Smooth, lumpy, Crunchy, Chewy

• Flavors:
  — Sweet, Sour, spicy, Salty
  — Taste Boosters: Italian dressing, BBQ sauce, Ketchup, Salsa, Gravy, Pasta, sauce, Ranch dressing, Mustard, honey mustard, Garlic powder, Curry powder, Balsamic vinegar, Hummus, Soy sauce, Teriyaki sauce, Cinnamon, Mint, Lemon juice, Lime juice, Lemon, or other citrus-flavor, yogurt (as a fruit dip)

• Temperatures- Too warm? Too cold?
How to improve sensory processing

- Warm/cold temperatures (washrags).
- BATH time is a GREAT time!
- Blowing can be calming—mirror, cotton balls, whistles.
- Bite/pull game (use with a child who understands how to maintain their bite). Great proprioceptive input!
- Modifying food preferences—make one change at a time.
- Get kiddos involved with food exploration and play! Gardens, play kitchens, cook together!
Oral Motor Skills

• Importance of positioning- highchair or booster with footrest.

• Muscle tone- hypotonic (low tone) v. hypertonic (high tone). The goal is to normalize tone, and the same strategies can be used.

• Movements needed for feeding:
  — Tongue retraction: Moves food back to swallow, without tongue thrust.
  — Tongue elevation: Clears food from roof of mouth, swallow efficiently.
Oral Motor Skills

- Tongue lateralization: Moves food within the mouth (side to side) to execute a rotary chewing pattern.

- Lip closure: To remove food from a spoon, swallow efficiently, eliminate fluid/food loss, drink from open cup.

- Lip rounding: drink from straw, blow, kiss.

- Jaw grading: Gauge biting small piece v large, chewing chicken v cracker.
How to Improve Oral Motor Skills

• Work on the specific movement(s) needed for the specific feeding skill *

• Facial massage/ Tap and Tone. See handout. (improve tone, lip closure, lip rounding)

• Vibration, electric toothbrush, bug kisses. Note: fine line between too little and too much. (improve tone, sensory, lip rounding)

• Infadent finger brush (improve sensory, chewing training)
How to Improve Oral Motor Skills

• NUK brush. (sensory, tongue lateralization, tongue retraction, tongue tip elevation)

• Chewy tube, NUK brush. Slim Jim, licorice- prior to teeth. See handout. (Chewing training)

• Active Pre-feeding (with a food item). I prefer Gerber Puffs and Veggie Stix. Choose material based on level of child. See handouts- Chewing Hierarchy 1 and 2. (chewing pattern development)
How to Improve Oral Motor Skills

• Bottle to cup transition - Advise parents not to wait long to introduce a sippy/straw cup as early as 4-6 months
  — Straw cups - bigger oral motor accomplishment. Playtex straw trainer sippy cup, A+
  — Have available at meal-times.
  — Begin to decrease daytime bottle feedings, then morning, then before bed
  — 12 months - baby should be getting all nutrition without the bottle, of course special circumstances apply. Comfort v. necessity.
Cups I Recommend:

- Playtex Little Gripper
- Playtex Twist and Click

These are still considered “sippy cups”, they have valves to prevent leaks. The 2 styles above, in whatever brand, promote the most mature oral motor skills.
Mealtimes! (thru different phases)

• Mealtime for a “new eater”:
  — What seating option? Bouncy seat? Highchair with good padding and support?
  — Convey excitement, accomplishment. Utilize imitation.
  — Gerber soft bite spoon, any spoon with a flat bowl.
  — Rice cereal the #1 food? Not necessarily.
  — Introduce a food, wait 3 days to rule out allergy and proceed.
  — Pureed fruits and vegetables- ripe, steamed, boiled...
Home-made Baby Food

- Cheaper
- You know ingredients
- Easy to adjust consistency (cereal to thicken, milk/formula/water to thin)
- Easier to transition thru texture progression: pureed, lumpy, fork mashed, small dices, large dices
Mealtimes! (thru different phases)

• Mealtime for a “transition eater” to “self feeder”:
  - In highchair with family mealtime. See handouts.
  - Meltable solids onto small dices, good options to work on self feeding with fingers.
  - Fork mashed, lumpy spoon foods. Roughly blend/ pulse the family dinner.
  - Biteable strips, time to practice holding and biting, and work on biting and chewing.
Cubed Solids

Some require cutting and chopping to a piece just a little bit bigger in size than a cheerio, size can vary as your child matures and also gets more teeth.

- Puffs cereal/ Cheerios
- Bananas (sliced and quartered or halved)
- Waffles/ pancakes
- Toast/ English muffins/ French toast
- Avocado, mango
- Chicken nuggets (cut into quarters)
- Pasta with sauce (chopped ziti or spirals)
- Ravioli or tortellini with sauce (quartered)
- Carrots (cooked well, quartered or halved)
- Mini meatballs (halved)
- Beans (depending on size, halved)
- Peas
- Turkey or chicken hotdogs (sliced and quartered or halved)
- Tofu (cubed and pan fried with soy sauce)
- Toast with spread (crust removed and cut into small bite-size squares)
- PBJ, grilled cheese (crust removed and cut into small bite-size squares)
Strips

Great to work on biting and bite/chew activities

- Veggie Sticks
- French fries
- Sweet potato fries
- Waffle strips
- Hamburger strips
- Chicken strips (sliced skinny)
- Steamed carrot sticks
- Pickle spears
- Pasta with sauce (long ziti noodles, or any firm tubular noodle)
- Thin pretzel sticks
- Toast strips
- French toast sticks
- PBJ, grilled cheese strips
- Veggie Stix (straws), Apple Stix (straws), Cheetos
- Block cheese (sliced and cut into strips)
- Apple slices (peeled)
- Steamed green beans
Independent Spoon Feeding

• Age? Proficient finger feeder? Have spoon available to explore.

• Shorter, chunky handle and shallow bowl- suction cup or dycem underneath (decrease slips).

• If child grasps spoon prolongedly, proceed to practice! Offer support at back end of spoon and child’s elbow.

• Cue the scoop (by tapping spoon into bowl).

• May take varying degrees of practice to master, assure parents it is ok to be messy!
Whew! We made it!
Resources/ References

• *Talk Tools* Training and Materials: www.talktools.com

• *Feeding and Nutrition for the Child with Special Needs.* Klein, Marsha Dunn and Delaney, Tracy.

• *The Sneaky Chef.* Lapine, Missy Chase.

• *Food Chaining: The Proven 6-Step Plan to Stop Picky Eating, Solve Feeding Problems, and Expand Your Child’s Diet.* Fishbein, Mark.

• Beckman Oral Motor Protocol: www.beckmanoralmotor.com

• Great Blog by a mom and OT: www.yourkidstable.com
Resources/ Ordering info

• http://www.babycenter.com
  – Age by Age Guide to feeding your baby
  – Age by Age Guide to feeding your toddler

• www.superduperinc.com

• www.talktools.com

• www.therapro.com