



## Feeding Difficulties of Children with Cerebral Palsy

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### Introduction

Are you the parent or carer of a cerebral palsy kid who is having feeding difficulties? If you answered yes, you are not alone! Mealtime may be difficult for many children with cerebral palsy due to dietary aversions, trouble swallowing, and chewing difficulties. If neglected, feeding issues in young children may lead to malnutrition and development delays. In this blog article, we will look at the most frequent feeding issues that children with cerebral palsy have and provide suggestions to assist them improve their eating habits. Now, take a cup of tea or coffee and let's get started!

### *What exactly is cerebral palsy?*

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a neurological condition that causes problems with muscular movement and coordination. It is caused by brain injury that happens before, during, or after birth. The severity of CP varies from moderate to severe, and the consequences differ from individual to person.

The majority of children with CP experience eating difficulties. They could have difficulty sucking, swallowing, or chewing. They may also have reflux, aspiration, or drooling problems. Some children with CP need tube feedings into their stomach or small intestine.

If your kid is having difficulty eating, there are several services available to assist you. You may get a referral to a speech therapist or occupational therapist from your child's paediatrician. There are also support groups for parents of children with cerebral palsy.

### *Feeding issues in children with cerebral palsy: What causes them?*

Feeding problems in children with cerebral palsy may be caused by a variety of factors. Some typical reasons include trouble coordinating the muscles required for swallowing, issues with tongue and lip alignment, and inadequate sucking reflexes. Moreover, some children with cerebral palsy may have difficulty eating or controlling their food owing to involuntary muscular movements.

The specific reason of feeding issues in children with cerebral palsy is unclear in many circumstances. These issues, however, are often manageable with a range of therapies such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and dietary adjustments for the youngster.

Because of the physical disabilities caused by the disorder, children with cerebral palsy often have eating issues. The degree of feeding issues varies according to the child's individual condition of cerebral palsy.

The following are some of the most frequent eating issues that children with cerebral palsy face:

1. Trouble swallowing, also known as dysphagia, may result in choking, coughing, and difficulties breathing during eating.
2. Oral motor dysfunction: This may result in difficulty biting, chewing, and moving food around in the mouth.
3. Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD): GERD is a disorder in which stomach acid rushes back into the oesophagus, causing pain, discomfort, and vomiting.
4. Poor weight growth and malnutrition: Feeding issues may make it difficult for children with cerebral palsy to acquire the nourishment they need, resulting in poor weight gain and malnutrition.
5. Aspiration: When food or liquid enters the lungs rather than the stomach, it may cause pneumonia or other respiratory difficulties.

A multidisciplinary team approach combining a speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, and dietician may be required to treat these eating issues. To assist enhance the child's eating ability and guarantee appropriate nutrition, they may propose a modified meal, specialist feeding apparatus, or feeding therapy. A feeding tube may be required in extreme situations to supply nutrients straight to the stomach.

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### ***How to Spot Feeding Issues in Children with Cerebral Palsy***

There are many indicators that a youngster is experiencing eating difficulties. Here are some examples:

- poor suck or swallow reflexes
- difficulty coordinating breathing with eating or drinking
- food or liquid flowing back up through the nose
- choking or gagging during meals
- taking a long time to eat or drink, or tired quickly at mealtimes
- refusing to eat or drink entirely

If you detect any of these symptoms in your kid, you should consult with your doctor or another healthcare expert. They can assist you in determining if your kid has eating problems and, if so, what treatment choices are available.

Therapy options for children with cerebral palsy who have eating issues. For children with cerebral palsy who have eating challenges, there are many therapeutic options available. These choices are classified as medical or non-medical interventions.

Medication to enhance swallowing function, gastrostomy tube implantation, or surgery to rectify anatomical anomalies may be used to treat eating issues in children with cerebral palsy. Non-medical therapies may include dietary adjustments for the kid, speech therapy to enhance swallow function, or occupational therapy to assist the youngster in learning new eating skills.

The optimum treatment plan for a kid with cerebral palsy and feeding issues will be tailored to the child's unique requirements. All children with cerebral palsy who have feeding challenges, on the other hand, should be examined by a multidisciplinary team of professionals who can offer complete treatment.

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### **Conclusion**

Eating problems are a typical and often major issue for children with cerebral palsy. It has the potential to have a significant influence on the quality of life and well-being of these youngsters as well as their families. Luckily, there are ways that parents and carers may use to assist in the management of feeding issues in these situations. We can assist ensure that children with cerebral palsy obtain the food they need for optimum growth and development by providing sufficient advice, support, and awareness of the problems they experience when it comes to eating.

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