

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS: BEST EVALUATION & TREATMENT

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feeding matters

*Conquering pediatric feeding struggles
to nourish healthy futures*

Feeding and swallowing problems are likely one piece of a puzzle for many infants and young children for a variety of reasons.

Parents and primary doctors have the most important roles for ongoing care. However, when there are complex issues, a team approach will be best. Some complex issues involve the airway, gastrointestinal tract, neurologic and cardiac status, along with nutrition.

Many children and families need coordinated evaluations to make sure that all issues are identified so management decisions are made for best possible safety and efficiency of feeding.

Most teams function in outpatient clinics and aid in transition for inpatient setting. Names for teams may include: Feeding Clinic, Feeding Disorders Clinic, Nutrition Clinic, Dysphagia Clinic, or Feeding, Swallowing, and Nutrition Center.

common types of teams:

1. multidisciplinary - families meet with varied professionals one at a time.
2. Interdisciplinary – key professionals meet with family together in one place (others may be involved as well)

comprehensive team members:

1. child and parents
2. doctor – physical examination and medical concerns (often gastroenterologist, developmental pediatrician, pediatrician, otolaryngologist, etc.)
3. nurse – coordinates follow up and primary communicator with family
4. dietician/nutritionist – nutrition assessment, needs and plans
5. speech-language pathologist – monitors communication development, oral skills and swallowing: completes videofluoroscopic swallow studies (VFSS) and participates in flexible endoscopic examination of swallowing (FEES)
6. psychologist – identifies and treats behavioral and psychological feeding related problems: monitors for broader behavioral/psychological concerns
7. occupational therapists – assess fine motor skills, posture and position, and sensory factors with intervention as needed

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other special roles:

1. social worker – available to help coordinate appointments, obtain local resources, etc.
2. physical therapist – motor skills
3. otolaryngologist - airway
4. pulmonologist
5. neurologist
6. surgeon
7. cardiologist
8. radiologist
9. others

major advantages:

1. direct, in person communication with team members
2. shared group outlook for evaluation, decision making, and treatment or therapy
3. team leaders aid in organization and information sharing
4. willingness to work together in creative problem solving and research
5. time commitment for labor intensive work

NOTES: