

# KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

*find the help your child deserves*



*feeding matters*

*Conquering pediatric feeding struggles  
to nourish healthy futures*

## *feeding is complex*

Feeding is a complex process that involves many muscles and bodily processes. Many believe that it is the most complex process that children learn. In fact, it is the only bodily task that requires the use of every organ and all of the senses. Pediatric feeding struggles occur when there is a disruption to this process and can become very overwhelming for some parents. It is important to know that it is okay to feel overwhelmed and that it is not your fault. If your child is struggling to eat, it is important for you to seek answers and to partner with your medical provider when discussing evaluation and treatment options.

## *medical providers do not have all of the answers*

Josh Garcia's daughter, Sophie, was pulled from her four week feeding program just after completing her second week of treatment. She had high anxiety and the doctors informed Josh that the treatment wasn't making her any better – it was actually making her worse. Now Josh is left wondering how he could have been recommended to a program that didn't match the skills set of his daughter.

Pediatric feeding is a relatively new field of medicine. In fact, many providers in medical school receive limited education about evaluation and treatment methods. They are doing the best they can with the training and education provided but sometimes it is not always enough. With minimal research available, there is not one single approach or discipline that specializes in the evaluation and treatment of feeding struggles. Because the evaluation and treatment of feeding struggles involves multiple disciplines, parents are sometimes left feeling unanswered, frustrated, and confused.

## *partnering with your provider*

To help guide you through this complex journey, it is best to find a medical provider who shares the same concerns about your child as you do. Chastity Wilson knows firsthand how important it is to find a medical provider that will listen to the parent's voice. You are with your child at every mealtime, every day, and can confidently explain their patterns and behaviors. Medical providers don't have that luxury because they only see your child for 10 – 15 minutes at a time. It is important that you have a voice and feel empowered to share your concerns. Your knowledge is key therefore, you and your family are the most important members of the team during the evaluation and treatment process.

## *defining goals and measuring success*

Sophie's short interim goals seemed achievable. Will she lick the food, will she touch it, taste it, or take a bite of it? However, the long term goals of the feeding program were never discussed with Josh. It is very important that parents are involved with establishing and measuring the feeding goals for their child. You should have an idea in mind for what you would like to see as a goal and to share your realistic expectations with your medical provider.

It is okay to ask your medical provider questions – you should continue asking questions until you feel satisfied with the answers. You know your child better than anybody else. If you are doubting the evaluation

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and treatment plan upfront or if you are not receiving desired results for your child, it is okay to voice your concern. If you see that you are not making progress three days into a two week program, let your medical provider know that the treatment isn't working. Ask them if there is another option available to try out. Don't feel obligated to complete the recommended plan if you are not seeing the progress that you expected because you are working with such valuable time.

## *seeking additional advice and guidance*

Every child and their pediatric feeding struggles are different. If your medical provider is not answering your questions, it is okay to seek another provider who will answer your questions. Alternatively, it is okay for your medical provider to not have all of the answers but they should be willing to partner with other providers to help find the answers.

It is important that you give your medical provider the facts and to challenge them if you strongly disagree with their recommended course of evaluation and treatment. You should trust your instincts and listen to your gut because you know your child better than anyone else. If you feel what your doctor is telling you isn't right, then you need to make the decision to do what is best for your child and their health.

## *keep in mind*

- Parents should feel empowered to question their medical provider
- Parents must know the goals of the intervention
- Medical provider should be available to communicate progress
- Medical provider must work as a partner with the parents

Notes: