

## **DROOLING**

Possible causes or reasons for problems with drooling include:

- Inadequate head and trunk control to support efficient swallowing.
- Inadequate frequency of swallowing causes excesses of saliva to accumulate and be drooled.
- Constant open mouth position that does not allow saliva to collect and provide the pressure cues needed to trigger the swallow.
- Means for obtaining attention or power.
- Increased saliva production can be a side effect of some medications or an allergic reaction. It can also be caused from eating sweet foods.

**Suggestions to help reduce drooling.**

1. Work to improve head and trunk control. Head control provides the basis for controlling drooling and promoting the development of swallowing skills.
2. Work to improve sensory awareness on and around the face and mouth. For children who drool frequently and always have a wet face, experiencing the difference between a dry and wet face may give them the inner choice to swallow. The following are some activities to help increase awareness:
  - Vary temperature, taste, pressure, and texture of objects and food in the mouth.
  - Help child play with a battery-operated vibrator around the face.
  - Wake up the face by wiping, brushing, and tapping the face.
  - Build an awareness of the concepts of the words “wet” and “dry”. Use different parts of the body or things around the house and discover things that make the face wet and dry.

- Use a mirror or other visual or nonverbal auditory feedback to let the child know as soon as drooling occurs.
3. Work to improve jaw, lip, and cheek control. Use activities that reduce jaw thrusting, a passive open mouth, and inactive or retracted lips and cheeks.
  4. For children who are aware of the drooling and are physically able to help control it, emphasize the goal of keeping dry. Work on inner discovery. Help cue the child to swallow or dry his face.
  5. For children who have low tone, a “snack cap” may help increase jaw stability during eating. Use the child’s favorite hat and add a one-inch elastic strap, which should comfortably assist with closing the jaw but not force it to close.
  6. When a child has low tone and limited movement of the cheeks or lips, straw drinking may increase movement and control of the cheeks and lips.

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