

Oral and Facial Hypersensitivity

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These are over-reactions to being touched in and around the mouth and face.. Some children with hypersensitivity refuse to accept new food textures or gag with any food texture other than pureed food. We can't say for sure why this happens. In some cases, children who have had feeding tubes in the past develop oral hypersensitivity.

You can help reduce your child's hypersensitivity by allowing him to get used to touch on a part of his body that is not sensitive and then gradually work your way toward the mouth and face. By starting slowly and giving your child plenty of time to get used to touch on the face and mouth, in time he will become used to being touched in those places and able to tolerate touch and textures better.

Start With Body Stimulation

Alert your child that you wish to cuddle him. It's best not to tickle the child, but touch gently but firmly on the arms, legs, or body. You can also massage the arms or legs or trunk of the body, but you should tell your child that you are going to massage him before you do it.

Work Toward the Face and Mouth

You might start by touching the arms or the back of the neck or head, depending on how sensitive your child is in those places. Gently touch, stroke, or massage for a few minutes 2-3 times per day. As your child becomes accustomed to this, gradually work toward the face and then into the mouth. As you start on the face, apply a warm washcloth with light pressure several times per day. You might use this technique before and after meals, for example. You can also touch your child's face with stuffed animals.

To help your child get used to touch in his mouth, encourage him to put toys in his mouth. Tooth brushing by hand or with an electric toothbrush are also good ways to stimulate the inside of the mouth.

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