



Oral Motor

The term "Oral-Motor" refers to the strength, coordination and range of movements needed for appropriate development of sounds involved in speech, management of saliva, feeding and swallowing.

Oral-Motor therapy is a technique often used with children who have difficulty with weak muscles, difficulty coordinating structures or difficulty with the appropriate range of movement with the structures in the face and mouth. The causes of oral-motor difficulties vary based on each child's case.

The areas typically affected and treated are the facial muscles, lips, cheeks, jaw, and tongue. Once your child has been evaluated by a Speech-Language Pathologist, your therapist will determine the functioning of these structures and the possible need for a personalized oral and/or facial exercise program.

The movements that are important for the productions of sounds, management of saliva, and manipulation of food in the mouth are:

- Retraction of the lips (smiling)
- Closing the lips together
- Maintaining closing lips together
- Rounding of the lips (kissing face)
- Movement of the tongue up, side to side and down
- Control of movements of the jaw

When a child is experiencing difficulty with oral motor functioning there are often some tell-tale signs. These signs may include:

- Poor production of sounds needed for intelligible speech
- Drooling
- Limited facial expressions
- Food remaining in the mouth when eating
- Refusal to eat certain types of food
- Difficulty progressing from bottle to table foods

The prognosis for children with oral-motor difficulty ranges based on the severity and cause of the impairment. The best outcomes of treatment for children with oral-motor difficulty include intensive and consistent enrollment in speech therapy services and specialized oral motor exercises tailored to your child's specific needs.