

# Does My Child Need Oral Placement Therapy?

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*As most of you already know, people with Down syndrome often have extreme difficulty speaking clearly and being understood. They also tend to have irregular or disordered eating patterns due to reduced oral sensation, muscle tone and strength. In the past, very traditional speech and language therapies have been used when treating our children's speech, language and feeding difficulties. Unfortunately, these therapies did not target the sensory component, low tone and low strength that most of our children with Down syndrome possess. This is why many adults with Down syndrome today have a slushy quality to their speech, and/or decreased speech intelligibility (ability for the listener to understand the speaker). However, since 1995, when Sara Rosenfeld-Johnson opened her company Talk Tools Therapy™, our world changed for the better. Talk Tools Therapy™ provides children with oral motor (OM) deficits an effective treatment for oral phase feeding difficulties/management disorders, speech sound errors, and decreased speech clarity.*

## **So what does this mean to me? What is an oral motor deficit?**

An oral motor deficit in children with Down syndrome typically presents as a lack of, or decreased: sensation, range of motion, or stability in the jaw, lips, tongue, soft palate, larynx and respiratory muscles; which affects feeding, speech clarity, and/or oral management.

## **How do I know if my child has an oral motor deficit?**

Being evaluated by a speech therapist that specializes in oral placement therapy is the only way to know for sure if your child has an oral motor deficit. (<http://www.talktools.com/find-a-therapist/>) However a few signs to look for include:

- \*open mouth resting posture
- \*tongue protrusion while speaking (tongue sitting on the bottom lip or between the teeth)
- \*tongue protrusion around the lip of a cup, around a straw or into a water bottle while drinking

\*mouthing/mashing/suckling foods on the roof of the mouth with the tongue (instead of chewing)

\*swallowing foods whole

\*chewing foods for a few seconds and swallowing early

\*observing leakage when drinking or eating

\*the necessity to use fingers or tilting of the head back or to the side to help transfer food around in the mouth - and/or messy eating

\*excessive drooling

\*limited jaw movements while speaking (very open mouth, or closed clenched mouth posture)

\*decreased lip movements during protrusion for / O, oo, w, ch, dj, sh, r/ sounds and/or retraction for /e/ sound

\*inability to feel food in the mouth and/or finding it there minutes/hours later

\*stuffing too much food in the mouth and/or choking on food

\*inability to elevate the tongue for the articulation of sounds /t, d, n, l, k, g, ch, sh, dj, r/

\*unintelligible speech at any level

## **When can I begin Oral Placement Therapy?**

Oral Placement Therapy can be initiated right after birth to ensure your baby is breast/bottle feeding correctly as well as maintaining early reflexes necessary for mature feeding development. Exercises can be given to help stimulate, strengthen, and maintain muscle movements within the oral cavity. Children of all ages receive Oral Placement Therapy including babies, toddlers, school age, and adults. It's never too late to initiate therapy or change the function of a muscle group.

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## What kind of tools will I need for OPT? How much does it cost?

The Talk Tools website is: [www.talktools.com](http://www.talktools.com). Tools not made by Talk Tools can be found on other websites like [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Tools used very often include: red/yellow chewy tubes, purple and green Ark Grabbers, DN-Z-vibe, horn hierarchy, straw hierarchy, and jaw grading bite blocks. Most clients tend to spend an average of \$200-400 on materials over the span of many years.

## How can I find out more information?

[www.TalkTools.com](http://www.TalkTools.com) The Talk Tools website contains articles, tools, therapists and other resources.

Families can contact Heather for an OPT Evaluation.

*Heather Peterson, MS, SLP-CCC*

*Talk Tools - Level 4 Specific to Down syndrome*

*CA:17173*

[www.happykidstherapy.com](http://www.happykidstherapy.com)

[heather@happykidstherapy.com](mailto:heather@happykidstherapy.com)