



Pull the Child out of Drool!

Drooling Causes & Management

Drooling is excessive flow of saliva from mouth. It is a normal phenomenon in children before the age of two years because many young children drool while teething.

Why does it happen?

Drooling commonly occurs in children due to poor neuromuscular control resulting in impaired oral motor activity. It may occur due to hyper-secretion of salivary glands, poor dental hygiene, gingivitis, developmental delays or as side effect of tranquilizer or anticonvulsant.

What Happens?

Children with drooling often get infections. There is danger of aspiration or dehydration in some children with excessive drooling. Children who drool are often misunderstood as mentally retarded. People tend to avoid interacting with them. This can result in child being lonely and some times may develop emotional problems.

Treatment:-

– It should be at least for six months. Medical & surgical treatment is considered in severe cases.

Oral training is aimed at:-

- 1) **Maintaining good oral hygiene,**
- 2) **Adequate oral stimulation.**
- 3) **Good mouth closure.**
- 4) **Improving oral functions.**



1) Good oral hygiene:- Brush his teeth twice a day. Teach the child to gargle well after brushing & after each meal. Make sure that no food remains in the mouth. Regular visits to a dentist are necessary to check if the child has cavities, decayed, broken or pointed teeth also any cuts or ulcers in the mouth as these tend to increase salivation.

2) Adequate oral stimulation:-If the child has poor oral sensitivity, hypoactive gag reflex, poor swallowing rate then drooling will increase. Oral stimulation increases child's sensory awareness which results in good swallow thus reduces drooling.

Exercises to Improve Oral Stimulation-

Give food and liquids of different textures, taste and smell to the child. The taste, smell or even sight of certain foods makes the child eager and willing to eat & swallow. (When the child is given pizza instead of dal-rice his swallowing rate increases). In short child should be given variety of to enhance his sensory experience.



Use oral stimulation brushes to increase sensitivity. This brushing can be made interesting by dipping the brush into any liquid that child likes. e.g. honey.

Use the brush inside the mouth to help the child improve swallowing. You can use liquids with different taste & smell. Ice popsicles, lollipops, chocolates can also be used.

3) Good mouth closure:- It is essential to control drooling.

Steps to achieve Mouth Closure

- Child must be placed in a Correct sitting position. Proper positioning is important before starting the training. If the child has poor head control or has a tendency to go into extension (Head tilted backwards) mouth closure & swallowing becomes difficult.
- Once the child is in correct posture ask him to close his lips for five counts & then open.
- C) Increase duration of counts gradually.
- Ask the child to hold a flat plastic (non- breakable) or wooden ice cream spoon between his lips for a few seconds.
- Increase the duration gradually.
- Put honey or jelly on the lips and ask him to take it in.
- Ask him to round his lips and then retract his lips (smile).
- Kiss a hand, make labial sounds like P-P-P or b-b-b.
- Ask the child to blow bubbles, cotton balls or a whistle.

All these exercises will strengthen the muscles to get good lip closure.

4) Improving oral functions :-

Chewing is most important as most of the oral muscles are used in chewing. It can be improved by giving food of different textures.

- Start with the food that is easy to chew i. e. biscuits of different variety, fruits like banana, apple pear, small balls of mashed rice-dal.
- To encourage chewing always give small pieces of food & put it at the sides, once in right and then left.
- Give the child enough time to chew & swallow the food. If the food is not chewed properly half of it will be spilled out of the mouth while drooling. This results in poor food intake & poor general health.
- Some children may vomit because of the half chewed food which also results in poor nutrition.
- If the child chews and swallows his food well all his oral muscles are strengthened which helps in reducing drooling.

Sucking creates oral pressure in the mouth using tongue, lip & buccal movements.

Ask the child to suck a lollipop, ice-pops or a liquid through a straw. Use liquids of different taste & smell.

Continued bottle feeding in young children for a long time results in tongue thrust and abnormal swallowing pattern which may cause drooling. Hence child should be encouraged to chew solid food as early as possible .

Parents are advised to carry out these exercises at home regularly to control child's drooling. Outcome of oral training depends largely on the understanding and willingness of the child.

Ms. Pradnya R. Patil.
Speech Therapist.
Mumbai.