



What is an oral motor disorder?

An oral motor disorder is the inability to use the mouth effectively for speaking, eating, chewing, blowing, or making specific sounds.

What causes an oral motor disorder?

One cause is the brain sending a message to the muscles of the mouth that the muscles don't receive or misinterpret. This causes the muscles either to not move at all, or to move incorrectly. Another cause is low muscle tone of the lips, tongue or jaw.

How do I know if my child has an oral motor disorder?

Signs of an oral motor problem include:

- open-mouth posture
- difficulty drinking from a straw
- leaking fluids from mouth while drinking
- excessive drooling
- inability to stick the tongue out or move it from side to side
- difficulty imitating oral movements
- groping for sounds or inconsistent production of sounds

How will oral motor disorders affect my child's ability to speak, eat and swallow?

A child who has difficulty moving his or her lips, tongue or jaw to produce a variety of sounds may struggle to communicate.

Weakness of the muscles of the lips, tongue or jaw make it difficult to chew, swallow and manipulate food within the mouth. This can result in episodes of choking or gagging that affect a child's willingness to eat.

Strengthening the muscles and their connections to the brain can be very important in improving both eating and speech.

What do I if I think my child has an oral motor disorder?

If you suspect your child has oral motor disorder, share your concerns with your pediatrician. You may be given a referral to a speech-language pathologist (speech therapist) for evaluation.

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How much will my child improve with treatment?

The outlook for every child is different depending on a variety of factors. The severity of the disorder, the cause of the disorder, the child's age when treatment begins, individual response to treatment, and the support of parents and teachers all make a difference.

How Courage Kenny Kids can help

In speech therapy, clinicians use techniques to improve function and coordination of oral motor structures (lips, jaw, tongue, cheeks, etc). Therapy may include passive and/or active stimulation. This is done in a positive play environment tailored to your child's individual needs.

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