

20 ➤ Feeding Therapy Ideas

1. Play with food in sensory bins: cooked noodles, rice, jello, pudding, etc.
2. Paint with spices and talk about smells, colors, and textures.
3. Finger paint with pureed foods.
4. Make a simple snack together including at least one food that's typically refused.
5. Use toothpicks and popsicles to turn non-preferred foods into lollipops.
6. Play peek-a-boo with foods that are avoided hiding under a napkin. Encourage imitation and turn taking.
7. Touch foods with fork and drive them around the plate like race-cars.
8. Use wet washcloths to wipe face, can practice in a mirror. Encourage deep pressure and for child to do to themselves.
9. Pretend non-preferred foods are bugs or fairies and have landed on different spots on your face. Look for imitation and encourage turn taking.
10. Drink applesauce or yogurt through a straw.
11. Play simon says with vibrating toy, touching parts of face and mouth, biting, licking, etc.
12. Sit in front of a mirror and put pudding on the corners of mouth, have child lick it off with no hands.
13. Play with, and maybe taste, frozen foods like peas, corn, and fruity popsicles.
14. Create a simple "data" sheet and collect "scientific information" from various foods such as the color, shape, and texture.
15. Use a piece of food or a "safe" non-edible object like a chewing toy to hold in between teeth without help of tongue or hold food on tip of tongue.
16. Use Wilbarger Brushing Protocol before interacting directly with foods.
17. Blow kisses to stuffed animals and family members repeatedly.
18. Knead and play with scented play dough.
19. Have a picnic (even if it's in a clinic or a school) right on the floor. Practice passing and serving foods.
20. Use cookie cutters to cut different shapes out of food.





Oral Motor Exercises

YourKidsTable.com

Children may have difficulty or need strengthening in all of the areas or they may need to focus on just one particular muscle. If you see your child has no problem completing certain groups of these exercises there's probably not a weakness there! *Affiliate links used below.*

Tongue Exercises:

Use a vibrating toothbrush to brush teeth (stimulates tongue movement)

- I like [this smaller one for babies and toddlers](#). Note that vibration can be intense sensory input, if your child refuses take baby steps to help them get used to the sensation. Never force.

Licking popsicles or lollipops outside of the mouth

Placing applesauce, yogurt, or pudding on the corners of the mouth and having kids lick off

Click or cluck tongue

Sing "La, la, la"

Try to touch tongue to tip of nose

Blow raspberries

Count teeth with tongue

Lip and Cheek Exercises:

Blowing air kisses

Drinking through a straw (Learn [how to teach babies and toddlers to drink from a straw](#) from as early as 9 months old).

- Experiment with thicker textures like milkshakes and even applesauce to make it more challenging.

Hold a small carrot stick or other food in between the teeth without using teeth to hold it steady

Make silly faces

- Fish lips (ages 3 and up)
- Make "O" shape with lips

- Spread lips far apart
- Kiss lips
- Blow fish face, with cheeks puffed out

[Blow bubbles](#) (20 months plus)

Humming

- Pick a nursery rhyme that your child likes and try humming it together

Play a harmonica

Use party blowers

Smack lips together

Blow whistles (easy one's can be used from about 18 months and older)

- There are a ton of whistles out there, many are very affordable. These ["lip kazoos"](#) are very easy and a great place to start.
- Other whistles like these blowers are more challenging. [Sets are also available](#) if you want a variety.

Jaw Exercises:

Bite on a vibrating toy

- [Baby teethingers](#) can work if they fit in your child's mouth.
- [Handheld massagers](#) can even be held to the jaw for a few seconds at a time to stimulate the muscles.
- These [animal jigglers](#) are designed to go inside your child's mouth and can even be used as utensils. Kids are often motivated to bite on the chewy texture.
- For the most intensive vibration therapists may [use a z-vibe](#). These are very powerful and should be used carefully, making sure your child is comfortable with the sensation. **Vibration is very stimulating to the muscles in short bursts of 3-5 seconds, but starts to relax the muscles after that point.** Watch for your child's reactions.

[Use a mesh bag](#) (found in the baby department) to chew on foods directly on the molars

- We want kids to chew directly on their molars, or where they will be, on the back of their gums. Hold (or have them hold) the mesh bag and chew while keeping it in place. I love to put frozen grapes or strawberries in the bag, but use a food you think your child will enjoy!

Chew on molars with chewy foods

- Dried mango strips
- Beef jerky
- Licorice