



When Should I Seek a Speech-Language or Feeding Evaluation?

Trust Your Instincts. Early Support Makes a Difference.

Every child develops at their own pace, but there are times when an evaluation can help answer questions, identify concerns, and provide guidance. You don't have to "wait and see" if you're worried.

If something doesn't feel right, it's okay to ask questions.



Speech & Language Red Flags

Birth–12 Months

Consider an evaluation if your child:

- Does not respond to sounds or voices.
 - Has limited eye contact or social interaction.
 - Rarely smiles or engages with others.
 - Does not babble by 9–12 months.
 - Does not respond to their name by 9–12 months.
 - Does not use gestures such as pointing, waving, or reaching by 12 months.
 - Has difficulty taking turns during interactions.
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12–24 Months

Consider an evaluation if your child:

- Says very few or no words by 18 months.
 - Uses fewer than 50 words by age 2.
 - Is not combining two words by 24 months (for example, "more juice").
 - Has difficulty understanding simple directions.
 - Becomes frustrated because others don't understand them.
 - Is not imitating sounds, words, or actions.
 - Shows little interest in communicating with others.
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2–3 Years

Consider an evaluation if your child:

- Is difficult for familiar adults to understand.
 - Is not using short phrases or simple sentences.
 - Has trouble following simple directions.
 - Has a very limited vocabulary.
 - Rarely asks for help or communicates wants and needs.
 - Stutters frequently or struggles to get words out.
 - Stops using words or skills they previously had.
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Feeding Red Flags

Consider a feeding evaluation if your child:

- Has difficulty breastfeeding or bottle-feeding.
 - Frequently coughs, chokes, or gags during meals.
 - Takes longer than **30–45 minutes** to finish a meal.
 - Refuses most new foods.
 - Eats fewer than about **20 different foods**.
 - Eliminates foods from their diet without replacing them.
 - Refuses entire food groups.
 - Has difficulty chewing or swallowing.
 - Frequently vomits or experiences painful meals.
 - Has poor weight gain or growth concerns.
 - Relies heavily on bottles beyond the recommended transition period.
 - Becomes extremely upset or anxious at mealtimes.
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Children May Benefit from an Evaluation If They Have...

Some children have a higher likelihood of speech, language, or feeding challenges.

Examples include:

- Prematurity
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Down syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Cleft lip and/or palate
- Hearing loss
- Tongue tie (when affecting feeding or function)
- Neurological conditions



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- Developmental delays
- Genetic syndromes
- Significant reflux or medical feeding history

Trust Your Instincts

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone else.

If you're thinking:

- "Something just seems different..."
- "My child isn't talking like other children."
- "Mealtimes are stressful every day."
- "I feel like we should get this checked."

It's okay to ask for help.

Early evaluation can provide reassurance, guidance, or intervention when needed.

What Happens During an Evaluation?

A comprehensive evaluation may include:

- ✓ Parent interview
- ✓ Developmental history
- ✓ Observation during play or meals
- ✓ Assessment of communication or feeding skills
- ✓ Personalized recommendations
- ✓ Time to ask questions

Every child is unique, and your evaluation is tailored to your child's individual needs.

Early Support Matters

Research shows that identifying concerns early can help children:

- Build communication skills.
 - Develop safe and confident eating skills.
 - Increase independence.
 - Improve participation at home, school, and in the community.
 - Reach their fullest potential.
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Remember

Seeking an evaluation doesn't mean something is "wrong."

It simply provides information, answers, and support to help your child succeed.

When concerns are identified early, children often make meaningful progress with the right support.

1st Foundations Pediatric Therapy

Helping children build strong foundations for lifelong success through expert virtual speech and feeding therapy. Virtual Services for Families Across Virginia and North Carolina

Have Questions?

Not sure if an evaluation is the right next step?

Schedule a free 15-minute consultation. We'll discuss your concerns, answer your questions, and help you determine whether an evaluation would be beneficial.