



Feeding Problems in Babies

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Feeding Problems Introduction



★ Feeding problems *do exist* in the first year of life (and later)



★ Parents are *not to blame* for feeding problems in babies



★ Feeding a very young baby can be very difficult

★ Feedings can be frustrating, parents often feel they are doing something wrong



Introduction ctd.



- ★ Young infants vary in their temperament, preferences, inclinations and “personality” even very early on.
- ★ There is a minimum of calories and proteins the baby has to ingest and digest in order to continue growing normally



Introduction ctd.



★ There are many reasons why a baby may not eat normally



★ The baby and the caregiver establish a **FEEDING RELATIONSHIP**



★ The baby responds to the context where feeding takes place, emotionally and to its physical characteristics.



Feeding problems



- ★ Feeding difficulties may affect up to 20 or 30 % of all infants
- ★ Most of the time mothers/fathers compensate for them
- ★ If severe, it may be a big challenge
- ★ 4% of infants develop failure to thrive
- ★ A higher proportion develop growth stunting



Feeding: Ingredients



- ★ Appetite
- ★ Ability to obtain the food (eg suckling, sucking, opening mouth)
- ★ Ability to process food in the mouth (eg chewing, swallowing, etc.)
- ★ Need to keep food in the stomach to lead to absorption



MATURATION of feeding skills

- ★ Suckling to sucking
- ★ 3-4 mo. Munching and then chewing at around 6 mo.
- ★ Semi solids, pureed foods, then solids
- ★ Vertical chewing to rotatory chewing
- ★ Motor skills necessary to get food in mouth
- ★ Play, exploration, exposure to new flavors and textures





Common feeding problems



★ First few months of life



★ From a few months to first birthday



★ Second and third years of life



First few months: sucking



★ Regulation of “states” of awake, asleep,

★ Managing transitions



★ Maintaining a burst of sucking

★ Difficulties in the motor act of sucking

★ Getting tired, not having enough energy



★ Coordination between sucking and breathing



Second semester of life



★ Ability to focus on the act of sucking, munching or chewing



★ Self-inhibition required to remain interested in eating, ability to sit



★ Sensory integration abilities , I.e. how baby processes stimuli in environment, noise, light, touch, movement, etc.



First birthday and second year



★ Managing increasingly complex textures, flavor, consistency, odors



★ Processing food in the mouth and then swallowing it



★ Aversion to new flavors, textures and odors

★ Acquisition of feeding skills and ability for self-regulation



continued



★ Issues of autonomy

★ Issues of control and independence

★ Issues of exploration

★ Play with the food

★ Respect for the needs of the child

★ Feeding situation ideally social and pleasurable





Mealtimes

Common *Myths* around meals and mealtimes

- ★ “clean everything from the plate”
- ★ “test at least one of each”
- ★ “children know instinctively what is good for them”
- ★ “Eat only when and if they want to”
- ★ “Mealtimes are just for eating”



Mealtimes



- ★ Like adults, children have preferences
- ★ Children tend to imitate their parents
- ★ Mealtimes are disappearing in many families
- ★ One incorporates much more than food during mealtimes
- ★ Unique features of each child