

# Carolina Pediatric Dysphagia



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## First of All, What is Dysphagia?

In simple terms, *dysphagia* is defined as “difficulty swallowing”, however, swallowing is not a simple process. Did you know that the act of swallowing involves 26 pairs of muscles and 7 cranial nerves? The process of swallowing is complex. It begins with the mere sight of food and ends with food entering (and staying in!) the stomach. These stages and the stages in between involve a combination of sensory and motor abilities that enable us to get food to our mouth, adequately “prepare” the food to be swallowed and control the food so that we can swallow it safely. *Dysphagia* can occur at any point during this process so it may present as anything from an inability to chew to chronic respiratory illnesses or choking.

## Carolina Pediatric Dysphagia...

Our specialty is children with dysphagia. We provide Oral Sensory-motor Feeding Evaluations, Modified Barium Swallowing Studies and Oral Sensory-motor Feeding therapy services for children with feeding and swallowing difficulties. We are medical based, but incorporate a child-focused, family-centered approach to therapy. In addition to having privileges at several area hospitals, we also have offices in Raleigh and Durham.

While Dysphagia is typically associated with speech pathology, the training and expertise required to treat infants and children are very specific. CPD is known for its level of experience in pediatric dysphagia. This includes 15 years of pediatric dysphagia experience, domestic and international speaking, university teaching, professional publications, chairmanship in the national (ASHA) dysphagia interest group, and membership in the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine.

## Evaluations...

Oral senso-what? **Oral Sensory-motor feeding evaluations.** This is simply an evaluation where your child’s feeding and swallowing abilities will be assessed.

Oral because feeding centers around the mouth. Sensory because we will look at how your child responds to different sensory input, such as food texture or temperature. Motor because we will look at your child’s oral muscles and how they function during feeding. Sensory-motor also because we will look at your child’s overall muscle tone, respiration and phonation, rib cage development and movement as it relates to feeding and swallowing.

This evaluation is used to identify potential problems with your child’s swallowing abilities. The most critical issues are the entrance of food or liquid into the airway (aspiration) or airway obstruction. These dangerous conditions can result in choking, frequent illnesses and breathing problems. If necessary a **Modified Barium Swallow Study (MBS)** will be recommended. The MBS is an x-ray videotaped study of your child’s swallowing abilities that we perform in the radiology department at a local hospital. Your child will be videotaped while he swallows a variety of foods and liquids coated with barium, a contrast substance that enables the food to show up on x-ray.

## Therapies...

If your child does have feeding and swallowing difficulties, we will recommend **Oral Sensory-motor feeding therapy.** Therapy sessions are usually one time per week for one-hour sessions. Most parents want to know “how long will he need this therapy?”, and unfortunately we do not usually have the answer. This usually depends on how severe the problems are and patient and family motivation and involvement. The long-term goal for all children is to establish safe and

efficient oral motor and feeding abilities. Therapy may address:

- Increasing oral motor tone, strength and mobility
- Facilitating normal processing and integration of sensory input
- Using compensatory techniques to avoid aspiration or other swallowing difficulties
- Facilitating adequate caloric intake for normal growth and development
- Facilitating normal development of the rib cage for improved coordination of breathing and swallowing
- Facilitating normal muscle tone and postures
  - Facilitating self feeding abilities

### Other Services:

- Family & caregiver education
- Coordination and collaboration with other therapies or services
  - Parent resource group
- Local and National Conferences/Inservices

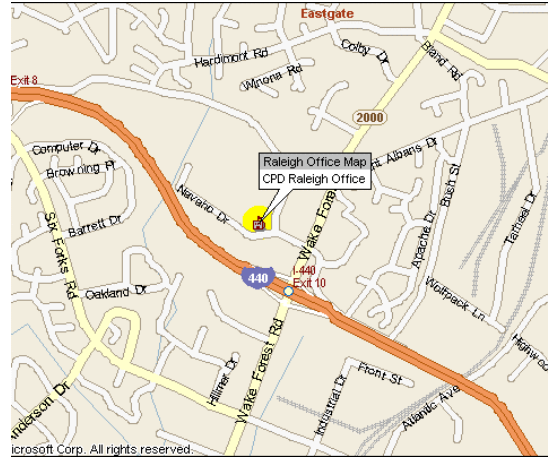
### See our other educational papers on:

- Dysphagia
- Swallowing Food Whole
- Down Syndrome Feeding
- Oral Exploration
- Modified Barium Swallow Studies
- Gastrostomy Feeding

Or visit our web site at:

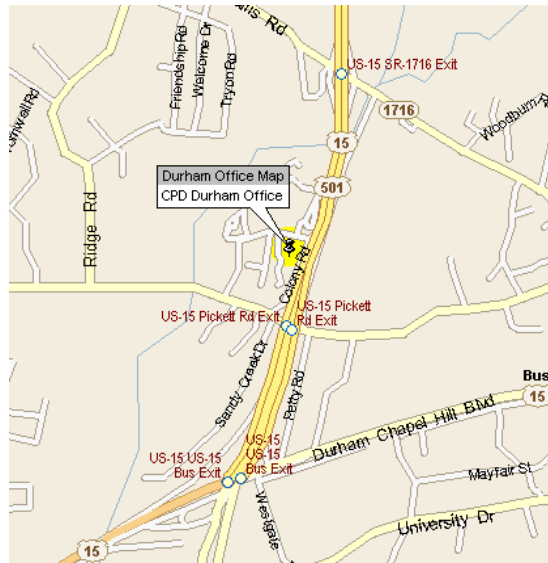
[www.feeding.com](http://www.feeding.com)

Physician offices and healthcare agencies: ask for one of our Dysphagia Posters



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### Durham

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When feeding  
your child isn't  
as easy as  
Grandma said  
it would be.

