

# CAROLINA

## *Speech & Feeding Center*

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### **Introducing Pediatric Feeding Therapy in Charlotte**

*Carolina Speech Therapy, Inc Opens Feeding Center in Charlotte*

Carolina Speech Therapy, Inc has opened a specialized feeding and swallowing center in Charlotte, the Carolina Speech & Feeding Center. The facility is a clinical setting specifically to treat feeding and swallowing disorders and is conveniently located across from Levine Children's Hospital and CMC. Clinic based therapy offers fewer distractions and specialized feeding equipment for feeding success.

Our feeding specialists have a vast array of experience with swallowing disorders, food aversions, NICU babies, tube dependency, difficulty transitioning to textures, and more. They also have specialized training certifications in the area of feeding and swallowing disorders. We have the only Level III

### **Feeding Specialist vs. Speech Therapist**

*Why choose to see an SLP who is a feeding specialist versus any SLP for a child who has feeding difficulties?*

All Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are able to treat feeding difficulties/dysphagia as it is within their scope of practice, but a feeding specialist has chosen to pursue additional education on the topic of feeding and swallowing. This additional education is in the form of continuing education classes as well as certifications for specific therapy approaches including, SOS approach to feeding therapy, TalkTools Oral placement therapy, and many others. In addition, feeding specialist spend most of their time treating feeding difficulties/dysphagia and the population of patients specifically with feeding as opposed to speech-language disorders. Feeding specialist have the skills and vast experience of implementing the proper techniques. ❖

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### **Patient Success Stories**

*Another patient success story through specialized training and experience at the Feeding Center*

"Johnny" was referred at age 18 months for feeding difficulty secondary to Down Syndrome. His mother

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TalkTools certified therapist in the region. A referral to a feeding specialist may be appropriate for any child whose parents have concerns regarding their eating and drinking or a growing frustration with the overall feeding process. There can be many underlying causes or factors to a child's difficulty with feeding including medical, behavioral, and environmental. ❖



## WHEN TO PART WITH SIPPY CUPS

When should parents introduce a sippy cup? When a child first starts to try solid foods is a good time to introduce a sippy cup with water for drinking. A starter sippy cup with handles is a good first choice. Parents may want to include breast milk or formula in a sippy cup to start to show that milk can come in something other than the bottle. It is typical for babies to throw the sippy cup at first but by 9 months old they should begin to drink from it.

Traditional sippy cups are designed for convenience for parents for a non-spill option and they are supposed to be only used as a transition to open cups. Due to the sucking pattern of sippy cups, if used too long they can change the position of the teeth and lead to a more forward position of the tongue in the mouth. Using cups with straws are a much better option for speech development and dental health. Make the switch from a sippy cup to a straw cup as soon as a child learns to drink from a straw.

Parents should encourage open cup drinking as soon as developmentally appropriate. Start introducing open cups between 12 and 15 months. Once the child masters the use of open cups encourage their use with meals and use straw cups when a no-spill option is needed. ❖

had been through all the standard channels trying to get her child a speech therapy referral as early as 6 months old but to no avail so she was thrilled to finally have a feeding specialist see her child. During the initial evaluation Johnny's mom was asked to give him his usual bottle so his drinking skills could first be assessed. Johnny's mom gave him a bottle of milk with a cross cut made in the nipple for increased flow and Johnny was then observed to lay on his back on the floor and let the milk leak into his mouth. He had no ability to suck from the bottle, no oral control of the milk that did enter his mouth, and needed the assistance of gravity to help him drink. Poor Johnny drank all his bottles this way. Yes, he was getting the required ounces of milk/formula needed for growth and gaining weight, but this process was debilitating for his family's quality of life and his mom was desperate to be able to live more normally around meal times. Plus it was taking this child 30 minutes to an hour to finish a 6-8 ounce bottle.

Within 4-6 sessions with a feeding specialist, new compensatory strategies taught and with a home program put in place, Johnny's ability to drink from a bottle as well as adding in a sippy cup significantly improved quite quickly. He was then able to drink his bottle on the go while riding in his car seat or drink from a sippy cup during a meal with his family and allowed him for the first time to participate in a meal with his family. His mom was then able to add in on the go snacks like the pouches of purees that can be so convenient on the run. Johnny's referral to Carolina Speech & Feeding Center changed his family's enjoyment of life at a very basic level and allowed Johnny to become a more independent eater. ❖

### Children Who Could Benefit from a Referral

- Feeding tube dependence
- Dysphagia or choking at meals
- Food aversion (refusal of food and/or drink)
- Delay in meeting feeding development milestones
- Any child who has not made progress with previous feeding therapy

### How to Refer a Child

Fax child's information to 704-278-0146 or call 704-380-0799 for more information