

Oral Exercises to Support Speech Development

Improving Speech through Oral Motor Exercises and Stimulation.

In order to produce speech sounds correctly our mouth and tongue need to move in a certain way. This can be difficult for children with low muscle tone and/or coordination difficulties. We can stimulate the systems and mechanisms that are involved in creating good quality speech sounds. To compliment this you can help your child strengthen their oral motor muscles through the following exercises. It is easiest if you get your child to imitate you doing the exercises. Be creative and enthusiastic and above all make it fun!

1. Tongue Push-Ups

Objective: To strengthen the tongue

Procedure: child holds half a grape or raisin, etc. on upper ridge just behind their teeth (not on teeth) and pushes up with their tongue (for a few seconds, extending the time day on day) – then the reward of eating the raisin!

2. Tongue Pops

Objective: To strengthen the tongue

Procedure: Suck tongue up on the top of the mouth, pull it back and release it, making a popping sound.

3. Back and Forth

Objective: To increase oral-motor coordination

Procedure: Stick out your tongue and move it from side-to-side, outside of the mouth making sure that the tongue does not touch the lips.

4. Icing

Objective: To increase oral stimulation and awareness.

Procedure: Using ice pops, ice, etc. move over the lips from the middle outward and then ask child to smile.

5. Brushing

Objective: To increase tactile stimulation/awareness for the lips.

Procedure: Brush lips with different textures (i.e. toothbrush, cotton swab, tongue depressor, spoon)

6. Whistle

Objective: To increase lip strength.

Procedure: Have child pucker lips and blow attempting to whistle.

7. Fish Mouth

Objective: To increase oral-motor strength.

Procedure: Pucker lips and suck cheeks in to make a "fish-face"

8. Say "Ah"

Objective: To increase strength of soft palate.

Procedure: While using a mirror child watches the soft palate move while saying "ah".

9. Sucking

Objective: To increase soft palate strength.

Procedure: Use a straw to suck up liquids. Also try holding a piece of paper at the end of a straw while sucking.

11. Blowing

Objective: To increase tongue strength.

Procedure: Have child blow objects (small balls, feathers, cotton balls, tissues) or bubbles through a straw. Use a mirror to help you do these exercises. Practice 2 to 3 times a day for about 10 to 20 minutes. Try them all.