Red Flags for Feeding Difficulties

Having a baby, child or adolescent who does not feed or eat well is a worrisome, frustrating, confusing, and at some times medically concerning, problem. We understand how hard it is to live with a child who doesn’t eat well. Our focus is on helping you as parents teach your child to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods in order to support their best growth. If you recognize several symptoms in a child screening for problem feeding may be warranted.

Infant

- Does not latch well and/or consistently to the breast or bottle
- Coughs or chokes with breast or bottle feedings
- Frequent and large spit ups, or projectile vomiting
- Spits up out of the nose regularly
- Refuses the bottle
- Takes more than 30 minutes to feed
- Falls asleep during the beginning part of the feeding
- Arches, cries, and/or hard to hold during or after feedings
- Unable to transition to baby food purees by 10 months of age
- Unable to accept any table food solids by 12 months of age
- Unable to transition from breast/bottle to a cup by 16 months of age
- History of eating and breathing coordination problems, with ongoing respiratory issues
- More than one caregiver reports difficulty feeding child

Child

- Mealtimes are stressful and a constant battle
- Cries, pulls away, and/or runs away at most meals
- Avoi ds all foods in specific texture or food group
- Poor weight gain (e.g., percentiles falling) or weight loss
- Eats less than 20 foods by 2 years of age
- Reports child as being “picky” at 2 or more well-child checks
- Chokes, gags, or coughs during meals
- Problems with vomiting while trying to eat or drink
- A traumatic choking incident
- More than one caregiver reports difficulty feeding child

Adolescent and Adult

- History of feeding difficulties and picky eating since childhood
- Previous intervention for an Eating Disorder or ARFID did not resolve the food issues
- Does not feel hungry or full
- Foods have to be prepared in a certain way
- Avoids foods in specific texture or food group
- Duration of eating during mealtimes is really short (less than 10 minutes) or really long (more than 60 minutes)
- It is hard to eat in a variety of settings (e.g., home, school, restaurants)
- Eating and/or mealtimes are experienced as stressful and/or fear-inducing
- Struggles to eat meals without distractions (e.g., watching tv, looking at phone)