

Sibling and Family Issues

- Discuss your child's feeding difficulties with your other children and do so as early as possible. Help them to understand what their siblings' feeding difficulties are and what to expect.
- Be open and honest in answering their questions, and provide answers at a level that your child will understand.
 - What children can understand:
 - Preschoolers, before age 5: Children at this age are usually unable to express themselves verbally, so they are more likely to express themselves through their behaviors. They are not able to understand the feeding difficulties of their siblings, but they do start to notice differences
 - Elementary school age children: Children are now more acutely aware of differences. They can understand explanations in proper terms. They might worry that the feeding difficulties are "contagious." They may feel guilty about having negative thoughts or feelings about the sibling. Some become overly helpful and well-behaved, and some become non-compliant to get attention. As with all sibling relationships, they experience conflicting feelings.
- Sometimes other children will imitate their siblings' challenging mealtime behaviors (e.g. refusing food, crying) because they are following their siblings' lead, or because they have noticed that their siblings are getting attention for their behavior; attention that they, too want.
 - Be sure to establish a set of mealtime "rules" that applies to all children in the family.
 - Use the hierarchy in the steps to eating and food chaining techniques that you are using with your child with feeding difficulties.
 - Try to keep things as equitable as possible (e.g. if one has chocolate milk they both get chocolate milk)
 - Have all children help in the kitchen to prepare or clean up from meals to the best of their ability. For your child with feeding difficulties, start with a task they can handle.
- Parents focused on a child with feeding difficulties may tend to give less attention to other children. It is important to give them regularly scheduled special time with each parent alone and together.
 - Special meals or trips to their favorite restaurant
 - At meals, have topics for dinnertime conversation that do not revolve around asking your child with feeding challenges to eat.
 - Maintain family style meals where each person helps pass & serve
 - Allow all children to help plan meal schedule & grocery shop

- Encourage your other children to pursue their own interests & give each special space for personal things.
 - Be sure to praise and compliment your child(ren) for helping and being a team player (especially around meals)
- Managing feeding difficulties can seem like a full time job! Consider enlisting the support of other relatives or friends when possible.
 - Remember to give yourself a “break” from the feeding routine once in a while