



# WHEN TO REFER

## for feeding therapy

### DID YOU KNOW?

Pediatric feeding disorders (PFDs) are more common than you might think! Recent research shows that the prevalence is reported to be 1 in 37 children under the age of 5 every year in the USA. **This rivals other common diagnoses, such as autism** (Kovacic et al., 2021).

### WHAT CAUSES FEEDING DIFFICULTIES?

- ✓ Medical challenges
- ✓ Oral Motor difficulties
- ✓ Sensory integration challenges
- ✓ Negative experiences from the past

### WHAT DOES NOT CAUSE FEEDING DIFFICULTIES?

- ✗ Parents
- ✗ A stubborn/defiant child

### WHAT ARE SOME RED FLAGS FOR A PFD?

- ❑ Ongoing poor weight gain (percentiles falling) or weight loss
- ❑ Ongoing choking, gagging or coughing when eating/drinking
- ❑ History of eating and breathing coordination problems, with ongoing respiratory issues
- ❑ Inability to accept any table food solids by 12 months of age
- ❑ Has not weaned off baby foods by 16 months of age
- ❑ Has less than 20 foods that they will eat; foods that are “lost” are not reacquired
- ❑ Is upset or cries often around new foods
- ❑ Refuses entire categories of food groups or textures (e.g., does not eat any fresh fruit)
- ❑ Usually eats different foods than the family, and often eats alone
- ❑ Mealtimes are stressful
- ❑ Parents are concerned about nutritional intake or choking

**Concerns?  
Refer, don't  
deter!**

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