

**Children (Early Childhood) with Suspected Autism Spectrum Disorder:
Common Issues & Strategies in Autism**

Common Issues	Description	Strategies
Oral-motor and feeding delays	Delays that interfere with tongue, lip, cheek or jaw movements; delays in skills such as: sucking, biting, chewing, swallowing foods/liquids; may be due to low postural/muscle tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering foods child can manage • Provide skill development of tongue, lips, cheeks • Provide skill development of biting, chewing, suck/swallow, • Provide appropriate positioning • Enhance muscle tone in oral/facial area
Decreased sensory skills	Decreases tolerance for various foods; choosing foods based on preferred and manageable textures, color, taste, smell, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer preferred and non-preferred foods at each meal • Address overall sensory processing issues • Systematic desensitization
Delayed hand skills	Delays that affect finger feeding, use of utensils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide skill development • Modify equipment
Limited tolerance for change	Food must be prepared or presented the same way each time or child becomes upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic desensitization • Reinforce a different positive behavior • Offer preferred and non-preferred foods at each meal
Adversive reactions to new foods (Food refusal)	Rejection of new foods by child (rule out food refusal that is “normal” during early development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic desensitization • Reinforce a different positive behavior • Offer preferred and non-preferred foods at each meal • Multiple exposures to new food
Self-limited food selection	Choosing only a limited number of foods or types of liquids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering foods child can manage • Systematic desensitization • Reinforce a different positive behavior • Offer foods that are similar to foods in current diet • Mask flavor with condiments, etc. • Add flavors child prefers to non-preferred foods and liquids
Food jags	Eating the same food, prepared the same way for every meal Child eventually tires of this food and will no longer eat it ever again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer variety of foods • Change the shape, taste, color, etc. every time food presented • Make small changes to foods • Offer preferred and non-preferred foods at each meal
Self-limited food groups	Choosing foods from only certain food groups (e.g., carbs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer foods child can manage • Systematic desensitization • Reinforce a different positive behavior • Offer preferred and non-preferred foods
Limited family mealtime	Lack of family meals due to variety of reasons; child may be grazing throughout the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a schedule and routine to meals • Eating in same room together • Role modeling

	day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit food access to meals/snack time
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