

## **Feeding Problems in Noonan Syndrome (2004)**

**Children with Noonan Syndrome who have feeding problems appear to show a similar pattern of development, the features of which are:-**

- Poor or slow sucking as newborns (this may include a period of tube feeding).
- Lack of interest in eating or an aversion for eating (this may follow prolonged tube feeding).
- Difficulty in progressing to solid food, particularly if this contains lumps.
- Poor chewing, which means meals take a long time. The older child may store food in the cheeks or forget to swallow.
- The development of a cyclic pattern of vomiting which appears to have no definable cause.
- A sensitivity to particular flavours of food and certain feeding utensils such that strong flavours may be preferred as may certain spoons or cups.

Whether this pattern of development can be improved or not by speech therapy intervention is not known. However, it is clear that some management strategies can improve or increase the degree of feeding problems.

**Here are some suggestions about management strategies that have been found useful:-**

- Always listen to the parents. They have the experience of dealing with the problem every day. It is arrogant to assume a professional air of knowing everything when not having to cope with the problem in the long term. Try to understand the pattern by which the problem has developed.
- Listen carefully to the case history looking for period of progress and/or regression.
- Observe the child eating something she/he is said to like, in as relaxed a situation as possible. Do not feed the child yourself, but let the parents do this.
- Initiate a discussion about ways of facilitating progress rather than dwelling on what appears to be insurmountable problems. Look for small signs that the child may be moving on to a new stage of development and capitalise on these.



