

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What areas are affected by poor oral motor skills?**

Oral motor skills are critical to basic functions that occur even when we are asleep, such as controlling secretions, swallowing, and maintaining alignment of the oral structures so that breathing is not interrupted. Oral motor skills impact basic survival such as sucking and swallowing by infants that begin by the third month of gestation. Development of these skills enhance the progression from breast milk or formula, then to pureed foods, and on to table foods, as well as the skills needed to progress from sucking a nipple, to using a wide variety of utensils, including straws, cups, spoons, and forks. Oral skills also impact the control needed for speech development, from producing the cooing sounds as an infant, to articulating complex words in conversational speech. Poor oral motor skills can result in delayed or reduced skill development for the areas listed above. The individual may be described as hypersensitive, a lazy talker or a picky or messy eater. Problems such as drooling, bruxism (tooth grinding) and gagging may occur.

## **Do all therapists receive the training needed to provide this service?**

Training programs for therapists vary from university to university. Each offers a core curriculum with the basics of anatomy and physiology necessary. Additional training and experience prepare the therapist for better focus on oral motor skills. As the consumer, ask the prospective team members about his or her experience in this area, and about outcomes for individuals previously treated that are similar to the concerns for the consumer. To receive training in the Beckman Oral Motor Assessment and Intervention methods, the therapist must have completed a specific training course for this method and have proof of attendance.

## **Who should provide oral motor therapy?**

Oral motor skills are impacted by many different things on the outside and on the inside of the body. Positioning and alignment of the body affects oral movement. Whether or not the individual has digested and passed out the food from prior meals affect oral skills. How alert the individual is also affects oral skills. Because of this, many professionals play a part in improving oral motor skills. Beckman recommends that a primary therapist be designated, typically a licensed Speech pathologist or licensed Occupational therapist who will assess the oral motor skills, plan the oral motor interventions needed and work closely with the other team members, such as care givers, physical therapists, registered dieticians, teachers, psychologists, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and others as indicated by the needs of the individual.