

*What to do in the formative years to help guide facial growth, nasal breathing, healthy sleep, and develop a healthy human:*

1. Breastfeed for as long as you can, ideally at least for a year. If possible, do it exclusively for 6 months.
2. Lightly pinch a nursing infant's lips closed for 20 seconds when she is done nursing. Every time you see lips apart, gently pinch them together for a few seconds. If they open again, close them again.
3. Limit pacifier use. If already using a pacifier start cessation at 3-4 months of age. The purpose of a pacifier in the initial months is to offer baby non-nutritive sucking for soothing and calming. After 4 months, there is no physiological purpose for baby and use can long-term contribute to poor tongue posture/function and jaw under-development.
4. Importance of nasal hygiene - want to enable and encourage silent and effortless nasal breathing. Nasal hygiene is for the long haul. Just as you brush your teeth/practice daily oral hygiene, one must in modern day, practice daily nasal hygiene.
5. Teach children to keep their mouths closed when not eating or talking.
6. Introduce solid foods that require chewing and/or gnawing; watch for choking.
  1. [www.babyledweaning.com](http://www.babyledweaning.com) is a great resource.
  2. Use baby feeders to safely allow infants/young toddlers to gnaw and chew and help optimize muscle function and jaw development (Munchkin Fresh Food Feeder, Silicone Baby Feeders)
7. If feeding purees, use a spoon with purees (as opposed to the squeeze packs). Using a spoon is advised for at least two months, to help develop lip motor skills.
8. Pay attention to toughness of foods and encourage thorough chewing. Each bite should have 10-15 chew strokes to promote good digestion.
9. Avoid most commercial "baby foods."
10. Check children's sleep habits: looking for mouth breathing and signs of disturbed slumber (i.e. tossing and turning, multiple awakenings, bed-wetting if potty-trained, tired upon waking, dark circles below the eyes, stomach sleeping, neck outstretched, tush in the air).
11. Treat any signs of a stuffy nose or snoring promptly. If congestion persists, think allergies. Maintain good nasal airflow obtained with nasal/sinus flushing (neti pot) and use of Kid's Xlear (helps keep a healthy flora in the nose/sinuses).
12. Follow recommended nasal hygiene recommendations twice daily.
13. Encourage thorough hand washing to limit nose-cold transmission.
14. Pay attention to baby's posture especially when it is being transported.
15. Limit slouching and head-forward postures over computers, phones and the like.
16. Help them practice hard chewing with a tough chewing gum.

### ***Signs/Symptoms of problems in oral-facial health, breathing, and sleep***

*— Yes answers suggest that there are aberrant growth patterns (the jaws are not developing optimally), facial/tongue muscles are dysfunctional and parafunctional, breathing patterns may be disturbing/fragmenting the child's sleep. We are here every step of the way (infancy, toddler years, childhood, teenage years, adulthood) to help re-establish optimal function and growth.*

1. While your child is sitting (i.e. watching TV or in the car) does he or she:
  - Put things in their mouth (toys, sleeves, pencils, fingers, etc.)?
  - Suck their lips?
  - Have an open mouth, even if only a little?
  - Have their tongue resting forward or between their teeth?
  - Rest their face on their hand?
  - Breathe through their mouth?
  - Make noise while breathing?
  - Have a hard time sitting still?
  
2. While your child speaks does he or she:
  - Talk too fast?
  - Talk too slowly?
  - Stop talking to breathe through their mouth?
  - Lisp?
  - Do the lips only rarely come in contact during speech? Ideally, lips should touch between each word.
  
3. While your child eats, does he or she:
  - Stop to breathe through their mouth between mouthfuls?
  - Stick their tongue out when swallowing?
  - Stick their tongue out when drinking?
  - Drink a lot of liquids with their food?
  - Make a lot of noise when chewing?
  - Take a breath when drinking?
  - Tighten their lips when swallowing?
  - Wrinkle their chin when swallowing?
  - Tilt their head when swallowing?
  
4. While your child is sleeping does he or she:
  - Sleep with their mouth open?
  - Snore?
  - Wet the bed?
  - Toss and turn?
  - Stretch their head backwards?
  - Wake up frequently?
  - Have nightmares?
  - Grind her teeth?
  - Have trouble waking up?
  - Have dark circles under their eyes?
  - Wake up drooling or with dry saliva on their face?
  - Wake up sweaty?

Other physical signs/health issues to look out for:

1. Nail biting
2. No space between baby teeth
3. Have an underbite
4. High palate
5. Recurrent ear infections
6. History of ear tubes being placed
7. Tonsils/adenoids needing removal (or were removed)
8. History of gastric reflux
9. Recurring GI issues: reflux, constipation

10. Diagnosis of ADD/ADHD
11. If your dentist has said go see the orthodontist
12. History of speech therapy
13. If you child appears anxious or depressed for no apparent reason

If you have any concerns that your child is not on track with jaw/airway development, optimal breathing, and optimal sleeping, please call or email us to schedule an evaluation. Early intervention is key to wellness!