



## INSPIRE INTEGRATIVE AIRWAY CARE - GROWTH GUIDANCE

Did you know that you can be involved in helping your child optimize growth and development of their teeth, airway and jaws? We can do important work early on to set our children up for a lifetime of straight teeth, healthy nasal breathing and good sleep. We are here to help and empower you with simple tips and tricks that you can incorporate into your daily routine to promote proper growth.

Our muscles, especially the tongue, serve as the scaffolding, shaping our children's smiles, jaws, airways and faces. The tongue has an important role of filling the roof of the mouth, helping to develop a broad and flat palate. Our children are similar to play dough, they are malleable, with 60% of craniofacial growth completed by age 6. It is important that we are proactive and encourage proper tongue posture and oral function to keep them on a healthy growth pattern.

### HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD? BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PROPER GROWTH

These building blocks will set your child up for proper growth and development. We understand that some of these "building blocks" may not work for your family. We want you to know that it is ok if you can't achieve every "building block" just understand that this is still an important time of growth for your child and we will want to take advantage of other opportunities to facilitate growth.

**BREASTFEEDING:** Nature's palatal expander. Breastfeeding is an important part of the development of your infant's mouth, requiring an active, sophisticated coordination of muscles. Bottle feeding is passive and puts your child's tongue in an undesirable position, creating poor swallow patterns and oral posture. We should understand that pacifiers and bottles are often needed and we use them with our own children. We just ask that you be mindful of how long your child is using a bottle or pacifier. During the first few months of life, pacifiers may be helpful but we recommend using a pacifier only when necessary and then removing it. After 6 months of age, pacifier use is associated with increased risk of ear infections and disruption of the development of dental arches.

- Suggestions: ninni pacifier

**CHEWING:** Baby will be ready to practice chewing around 4 months, provide your child lots of practice. Chewing is "exercise" for the jaws, face and airway and is critical for proper development. Provide your child with age-appropriate oral motor toys and allow lots of practice.

- Suggestions: oballs, beckman tri chews and similar

**SOLID FOODS & A HEALTHY DIET:** Consider incorporating some solid foods in your child's diet around 6 months. Children that eat foods that require chewing, exercise their jaw and growth their dental arches and airways. Provide foods that present an appropriate chewing challenge. Encourage your child to chew several times before swallowing with their lips sealed. Ensure a balanced diet with sufficient vitamins and minerals, including calcium, vitamin D and K2, which among other things, are important for healthy bones and teeth. Think broths, grass fed meats, dark green veggies.

- Suggestions: Baby Led Weaning by Gil Rapley and Healthy Kids, Happy Kids by Elisa Song

**CUP DRINKING:** Help your child drink from a cup as early as 6 months. It is best to replace bottles with open cups or cups with short straws by 12-15 months. Cup drinking allows for proper swallow and for the tongue to be in the correct position

- Suggestions: EZPZ straw cup

**NASAL BREATHING:** Encourage your child to breathe through their nose. Encourage lip seal by gently closing an infant's lips and remind older children verbally. Practice nasal hygiene, keep your child's nose clear so they can breathe through their nose.

- Suggestions: Xlear Nasal Rinse

**TONGUE POSTURE:** We want your child's tongue to rest behind the front teeth. Their lips should be sealed and they should be breathing through their nose. You can help your child identify this spot by making a clicking sound with your tongue, against your palate and have them repeat it back to you. When the tongue is in this position, it is pushing the jaws to grow in the correct position. You will be surprised that even small infants will begin to copy this movement after a few tongue click demonstrations.

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