

## Chew Oral Motor Program (CHOMP)

*Please note that the following program should be completed under the supervision of a speech-language pathologist or an occupational therapist.*

When a child needs to receive nutrition by tube instead of the mouth, the result is often an increased sensitivity to anything entering the mouth, as well as an increased difficulty with swallowing saliva. Opportunities to experience the taste, temperature, touch, and smell of food are no longer available on a regular basis. The main focus of CHOMP is to help children maintain their oral motor skills, as well as to develop sensory awareness and discrimination of different food textures, tastes, and temperatures.

Another aspect of CHOMP is to maximize social interaction and communication skills with food as the topic. For most of us, mealtimes are seen as a social time. However, children on tube feedings are often fed in isolated situations, having minimum contact with others. The focus is often on the mechanics of the tube feed rather than the social interaction that is normally part of the meal-time.

Preparation:

1. Try to complete the CHOMP at regular meal times, so that the person associates the activity with a typical eating environment. Mealtimes are also a good time for social interaction.
2. Make sure that the student is comfortably and properly seated.
3. Wash your hands.
4. Use a warm damp facecloth and with firm pressure pat around the outside of the mouth. Avoid wiping across the mouth.
5. If possible, use two different foods. Take each food item, and show it to the student. Let him/her smell and feel it. Then let the student choose one of them.
6. Place a small amount of the chosen food in a square of cloth and then twist the cloth to form a "ghost" in order to make sure that the food doesn't escape into the mouth. The food should be no more than ½" in diameter. The type of cloth needs to be thin enough so that the taste of the food gets through, but is also strong enough to not break apart when the child chews on it. It should not be stretchy or contain dye. Antron or light cotton interfacing work well, both of which are available at fabric stores. Cheesecloth does not work well,

because of the uneven threads which can get caught between teeth and also because it is too porous and can break down with vigorous chewing. The cloth should be moistened before placing it in the student's mouth.

7. Hold the food bundle firmly at the twist as you place the food on the student's lips and the front of the tongue. Gradually work the bundle back to between the molars, keeping the food directly under the last upper molar. Don't let the food slip into the area of throat or onto the back third of the tongue, as this may cause gagging. Keep your fingers against the outer side of the tooth near the upper gum.
8. If the student does not initiate chewing on the food bundle, try pressing it up into the upper molar at a rate on one press per second.
9. Support the student's jaw, if needed, but don't force it shut.
10. Talk about the food as the student is tasting it (e.g., crispy, sweet, sour, etc.).
11. Give the opportunity to chew on both the right and left side. Watch for any difference in skill between the two sides. If the student doesn't chew the material much on one side, use the same chew bag for the other side. If the food in the bag is broken down, make another "ghost" with a new cloth for the other side.
12. If, for any reason, the student begins showing signs of distress (such as grimacing, pulling away, or crying), back off for a minute and assist him/her to calm down before proceeding. If s/he becomes distressed again after you give a second try, discontinue and try again at the next meal-time. Also, if the student is sick for a few days, you may have to discontinue the program until he recovers.

Watch for the following while the student is CHOMPing:

- ◆ General response - is the student tense or relaxed? Does he/she like the taste, temperature, or texture? This should be an enjoyable experience for him/her.
- ◆ Swallowing - is it easy or difficult to see a swallow? Does a swallow occur within one or two seconds, or does it take longer?
- ◆ Jaw movement - What is the range, strength, and control of the jaw? Are there any abnormal movements?
- ◆ Tongue Movement - Does the tongue move over towards the chew bag?

Almost any type of food can be used, keeping these considerations in mind:

- ◆ Be aware of allergies and intolerances.

- ◆ If the student is having difficulty controlling his/her saliva, avoid foods that are sweet and/or contain a lot of fat because they tend to produce more saliva and are harmful if aspirated. Because everyone is different, if you notice a food that increases saliva production, avoid that food in the future.
- ◆ Don't use liquids, and strain juicy food before using.
- ◆ A dry CHOMP doesn't produce as much saliva and the use of crunchy textures give more sensory feedback.

Here are some examples of foods to try:

- ◆ Fruits: apples, pears, pineapple, strawberries, blueberries
- ◆ Raw/lightly cooked vegetables: broccoli, cauliflower, peas, carrots, peppers
- ◆ Cooked meat/fish, pepperoni, chicken, ham, sausage, cold cuts, jerky
- ◆ Crackers: fish crackers, Ritz, saltines, rice cakes, Matzos, bread sticks
- ◆ Crisps: Veggie Stix, Pirates Booty, Cheezies
- ◆ Cereals: Cheerios, Rice Crispies, Corn Bran, Shreddies
- ◆ Sweets: cake, cookies, licorice, fruit leather, gum, gummi bears, chocolate
- ◆ Cheese: cheddar, Monterey Jack, mozzarella

The document was originally developed through the Pediatric Feeding and Swallowing Service, Vancouver Island Health Authority