

ACTIVITY HANDOUT: APPLYING STRATEGIES DURING FEEDING

[MODULE 5: Strategies to Address Feeding Difficulties for Infants with Disabilities]

Condition	Anticipated challenges during feeding	Recommended position or strategy	Reason for recommendation
Down syndrome	Low muscle tone May tire quickly A weak seal and uncoordinated sucking May need support for positioning. Reduced sensation may make it difficult for the infant to feel the milk in their mouth and impact their ability to swallow at the right time, which can increase the risk for aspiration.		
Cleft lip	If associated with a syndrome, there could be further complications. May have difficulty achieving a good latch with a complete seal around the breast. The opening in the lip causes air to escape and feeding can be inefficient. May lose milk from the mouth frequently due to the opening.		

Cerebral palsy	Likely to have issues with muscle tone. For high muscle tone, the stiffness may impact how the infant moves their tongue, jaw, and lips Infant may need support to achieve a stable and safe position. Difficulty opening the mouth wide enough or opening it too wide, making it difficult to achieve and maintain a good latch. May be at high risk for aspiration.		
Spina bifida/ hydrocephalus	The impact of spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus can vary widely. Infant's movement skills may be impacted, which could mean the infant requires support for body positioning. Infant may have difficulty achieving and maintaining good attachment and to suck effectively. Frequent vomiting or reflux possible.		