

## Why early referral for feeding therapy is crucial

**Early detection and referral for the need of skilled infant feeding therapy is crucial.** The below r. Below are reasons why it is important to support families early when there are signs of feeding difficulties in their child.

### Reasons for early referral:

- When children don't eat, families experience: all-encompassing fear, concerns that are often not heard, guilt and a feeling that they are the cause for their child's growth failure, and isolation and helplessness
- Over 2.3 million children under the age of 5 nationally experience severe feeding disorder annually
- Many children with such problems are not identified at well-child visits
- Demands during eating become more complex over time, and feeding skills require a strong foundation of skill, desire, and parental competence and confidence (Ross, 2018)
- Feeding is a complex process involving 26 muscles, 6 cranial nerves, and the coordination interaction among several of the body's organs and systems
- Children who have persistent feeding difficulties went on to have significant delays in motor, language, and behavior milestones at 18 months (about 1 and a half years) and 30 months (about 2 and a half years) of age
- Children with developmental issues often present **first** with feeding problems (Dubois et al., 2007))
- "Problem eaters" are more likely to have a Body Mass Index below the 10th percentile at 4.5 years of age compared to the children who were never reported as being "picky eaters" at any one time point (i.e., 71% of the children (Dubois et al., 2007)
- Later diagnosed children with Autism Spectrum Disorder were described as significant differences in feeding (i.e., later introduction of solids, described as "slow feeders" at 6 months of age, from 15 months to 54 months (about 4 and a half years) of age children were consistently reported as "difficult to feed", from 15 months had a significantly less varied diet, and by 24 months (about 2 years) of age were more likely to have a different diet from their family (Edmond et al., 2010)