

Management of Dribbling

Why do children dribble?

Children who persistently dribble often have difficulties with closing their mouth. They may also have limited awareness of how their mouths feel and therefore do not notice that they are dribbling. Some know they are dribbling but find it hard to control it. Other children may have trouble swallowing quickly.

What can be done to help?

Different things work for different children, here are some things you could try:

Wiping the mouth

Do not wipe across the mouth as this makes the child dribble more. Pat firmly around the mouth with three dabs using a pad of tissue.

Try and help the child to do this for him/herself.

Try not to do this more than is really necessary

Encouraging the child to close their mouths

If the child needs to breathe through their mouths this isn't really possible.

You can also remind the child to close their mouth by getting them to copy you.

Get the child to practise closing their lips by getting them to hold a piece of paper or tissue between their lips for a few seconds.

Get them to puff out their cheeks and let them go. This can be done in front of a mirror.

Use straws, Kazoos, trumpets, bubbles.

Playing with noises e.g. raspberries, kisses, car noises, mmm, puh puh puh

Experimenting with taste, temperature, texture

This helps the child to become more aware of their mouths, which in turn helps them to be more aware of when they dribble.

Try sucking up a variety of drinks with straws e.g. hot drinks (hot milk/chocolate), fruit juice, thick and thin milkshakes, drinks straight from the fridge.

Try tasting a variety of food e.g. hot, cold, sour, sweet, and spicy. Try putting the food on the child's lips encouraging them to lick it off.

Helping them to sit

Children tend to dribble less when they are upright, as it is easier to swallow. Encourage the child to sit up rather than slouch. If this is difficult for the child you may need additional advice from a Physiotherapist or an Occupational Therapist.

Meet with your speech and language therapist for more ideas and advice.