

## Target Behavior: Spitting

Things to consider: Try behavior analyses to see if there are specific triggers for the spitting. It might be helpful to use the A-B-C approach (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) to analyze the behavior. You may find that the behavior increases during times of stress, or in response to certain settings or environments. If so, think about what accommodations may be helpful. From a sensory perspective, spitting can indicate that the individual is seeking oral input to the mouth, visual input, and/or auditory input (from the reactions of people around him/her). Behaviors like this are not always rooted in a sensory need though; spitting and other similar behaviors can be a way of communicating frustration or anger, gaining control, eliciting a reaction from others, or avoiding certain tasks. When in doubt, start with a strong sensory approach, track the data, and see if a sensory approach is successful in decreasing the behavior.

### Sensory Diet Strategies:

- Offer communication options such as sign language or visual communication tools such as the Picture Exchange Communication System
- Provide a visual schedule with plenty of choices to provide the child as much control as possible
- Throughout the day, encourage activities that provide oral input such as
  - chewing toys and chewable jewelry and/or oral vibrators
  - blowing toys and games - blowing a cotton ball toward a target, pinwheels, blow toys with balls that hover over a basket, etc.
  - drinking through straws – you can even try having the child drink yogurt or jello through a straw for increased resistance
- Try to provide a longer sensory break every couple of hours (10-20 minutes for most kids). Here's a great way to structure these longer breaks:
  - First, let the child choose a whole-body proprioceptive activity:
    - scooter board (on tummy)
    - rolling on a mat or being rolled up like a “burrito”
    - an obstacle course that includes a lot of crawling
    - while the child is participating in one of the above activities, have him/her keep a chew toy or a blow toy in his/her mouth
  - Second, focus on the mouth:
    - use oral vibration to the mouth
    - provide games and toys that encourage blowing
    - encourage chewing against resistance – for example, have the child bite down on an appropriate chew toy while you tug on it
    - finish with a chewy food or drinking a thick liquid through a straw



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