



Tongue Thrust

What is a Tongue Thrust?

Tongue thrusting is a way of swallowing. During a tongue thrust swallow, the tongue pushes against the front teeth or through the upper and lower teeth. Almost all infants swallow this way. Most children, but not all, automatically change to the “mature,” swallowing pattern. A mature swallow pattern is when the tongue tip elevates behind the top front teeth and presses up and back in the mouth. The average person swallows 600-2,000 times a day. Each slight push of the tongue has an effect on the balance of the muscles involved.

Effects of a Tongue Thrust?

A tongue thrust swallow may contribute to dental problems, malformation of the jaw, or underdevelopment of the airway. If your child has speech sound errors, correcting the tongue thrust may be helpful in the process of speech improvement. Various factors may influence this swallowing pattern. Some of these include thumb sucking, pacifier use, enlarged tonsils or adenoids, allergies, poor muscle control, and a high, narrow palate.

Why am I being referred to a Speech Language Pathologist?

Speech Language Pathologists have extensive training in the muscles used for speech and swallowing. Your child must be taught to swallow a new way, with the tongue moving up and back in the mouth. The goal of therapy is to teach your child to retrain the muscles involved in swallowing and teach the tongue to rest in a new position in the mouth.

Information adapted from Richardson, M. (2003). *The Tongue Thrust Book: Oral Myofunctional Therapy and Articulation Correction* (2nd ed., p. 18). Pro-Ed.