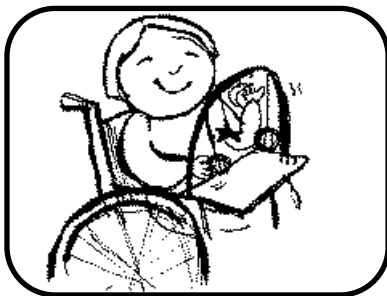


GETTING THOSE HANDS OUT OF THE MOUTH

Some children love to suck their fingers and when their hands are in their mouths their dribbling problem gets worse. Usually children suck their hands for comfort and because they like the sensation. It is best to give the child something else to do such as:

- provide an activity using their hands (maybe a puzzle or toy, a mobile, playing in the water)
- providing an activity for the hands that gives a very positive sensory feel. This might be a vibrating toy/cushion, a box of scarves, finger painting, vibrating tube.
- engaging the child in some other way (maybe reading a book together, singing, playing hand games).



Some children will respond to either verbal or visual prompts to take their hands out of their mouths. For those children who suck their hands obsessively to such an extent that their skin gets broken and sore the following can be tried:

- Ask an Occupational therapist for some advice. Sometimes deep “brushing” can be very satisfying for a child and encourage them to use their hands differently.
- Wear gloves with a range of different textures attached e.g bells, stickle bricks, pot scourers, so the child plays with the objects rather than the fingers. Make sure the objects are firmly attached.
- Try putting different tasting ‘foul’ substances on the fingers.
- Build a box with a perspex lid (see through). Cut two holes in the lid and line with rubber. Put a firm catch on the lid. Then the child’s favourite toys/textures can be put in the box. Put the child’s hands through the holes and click the lock on the the lid. The holes in the lid should be big enough for the child’s arms but not allow the child’s hands to come out easily. This can encourage the child to play for longer periods with the hands.
- Elbow splints can be used to stop the child putting their hands into the mouth but still allowing the child to use their hands.

