

## Background

Feeding difficulties are commonly reported in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). It has been reported in the literature that between 46-89% of children with ASD present with a feeding difficulty of some description. This poster describes feeding difficulties presented in children with ASD, how an informational brochure can be made in a parent-friendly manner, and the possible resources that can be used by both providers and parents to encourage more positive feeding behaviors.

## Aims

This project aims to explore the relationship between food and children with ASD, to develop an informational brochure for parents of children with ASD, and to educate providers on possible feeding challenges faced by children with ASD.

## Methods

A literature review was conducted to investigate possible feeding challenges faced by children with ASD, as well as evidence-based treatments and resources for parents. An informational brochure regarding this information was created in a parent-friendly manner to be distributed to parents of children with ASD and healthcare providers.

## Results

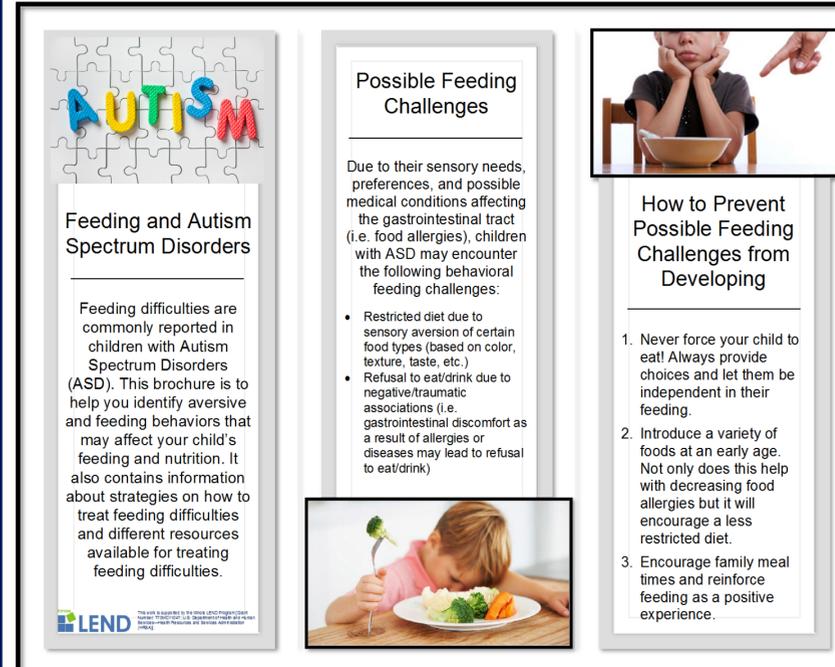


Figure 1

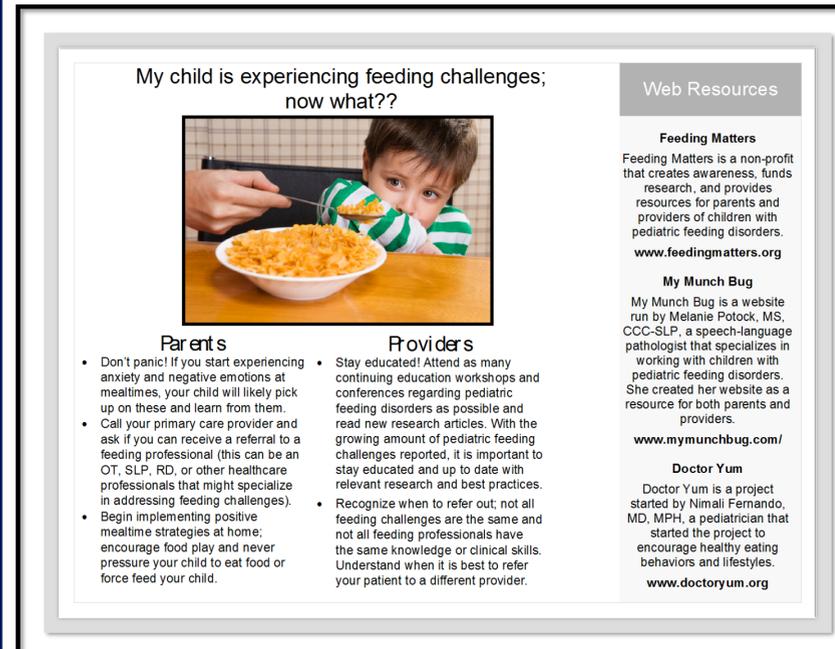


Figure 2

### Figure 1: Parent Brochure Front Page

The front page of the parent brochure gives a brief, parent-friendly introduction to possible feeding challenges encountered by children with ASD. Without overwhelming medical jargon, the brochure presents feeding obstacles that may occur and provides preventative/therapeutic strategies. The brochure also expresses the possibility of co-occurring medical conditions that may affect the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Research has shown that eosinophilic esophagitis (or EoE), a chronic, immune/antigen-mediated, esophageal disease was found to be more common in children with ASD than control populations. This is one example of a comorbid disease that is associated with feeding disorders; thus, children with ASD can present with feeding disorders as a result of their ASD or due to a comorbid GI disease.

### Figure 2: Parent Brochure Back Page

The back page of the parent brochure provides web resources for parents to learn more about pediatric feeding disorders. It also details what parents and providers can do in response to a child presenting with feeding and mealtime challenges. Research has shown that a variety of feeding behaviors and disorders are associated with ASD, such as packing, restricted diet, and failure to thrive. Due to the wide variety of possible feeding concerns and the growing research, healthcare providers that work with this population must stay educated on relevant research to provide evidence based best practice. Additionally, parents should encourage positive feeding experiences at home and implement therapeutic suggestions to encourage generalization.

## Conclusion

Children with ASD may present with feeding challenges, such as a restricted diet due to sensory aversions, limited preferences, or gastrointestinal disease. These challenges should be treated by an interprofessional team to address medical concerns while considering the psychosocial aspects and family dynamics of mealtimes. Family concerns should be addressed and incorporated to individualize feeding therapy while reducing burden. Parent and caretaker education and participation are necessary to overcome feeding obstacles in this population. With comprehensive family education and cooperation, as well as evidence-based practice from trained professionals, children with ASD may overcome feeding challenges to reduce nutritional concerns, mealtime stress, and medical complications.

## References

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