

## Paediatric Dysphagia, Parenting Stress and Feeding Tubes

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Paediatric swallowing/feeding disorders impact families. Feeding tubes hypothetically lower caregivers' stress as the child receives adequate nutrition but may increase stress due to changes in family dynamics.

**Aim:** To investigate the association between feeding tubes and family/caregiver stress.

**Methods:** Families of children (n=98, age 1:0-4:11 years) with feeding/swallowing disorders completed a demographic questionnaire, The Parenting Stress Index -SF1, The Functional Health Status II-R2, and The Pediatric Feeding & Swallowing Disorders Family Impact Scale-R. Groups with/without feeding tube were compared across demographics and stress questionnaires using Chi square and t-tests.

**Results:** The degree of medical complexity ( $\chi^2(2, n=97)=7.87, p=0.005$ ) and the age when feeding problems were first noted ( $t(94)=-2.175, p=0.032$ ) were different between the two groups. More children with tubes had 3 or more diagnoses and feeding problems identified at an earlier age.

**Conclusions:** Families of children with feeding tubes have higher stress levels but this study did not support this was due to the impact of the feeding disorder on the family. Understanding these factors may help better prepare clinicians working with families caring for a child with dysphagia.

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