

# Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

## Oral-Massaging Techniques

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Oral-massaging techniques are often an effective part of oral-motor therapy. These techniques focus on improving the use and function of the face (lips, tongue, and jaw) through movement, coordination, and strength exercises. Adequate oral function of the lips, tongue, and jaw is necessary to perform common activities of daily living such as eating, drinking, and speaking.

Contact a physician, speech-language pathologist (SLP), or occupational therapist (OT) for a referral/assessment for oral-motor deficits.



### What Are Some Different Types of Oral-Massaging Techniques?

**Touch** – involves rubbing the individual’s oral (mouth) structures with fingers/hands or objects of various textures and/or temperatures (brushes, stuffed animals, wash cloths, wet paper towels, cold sponges) (Kranowitz, 1998, p. 24)



**Pressure** – involves applying different levels of pressure (from “light” to “heavy”) to an individual’s oral structures with fingers/hands or objects of various textures and/or temperatures (Kranowitz, 1998, p. 24)



**Vibration instruments** – involves using various vibrating massagers with different textures on the ends (such as brushes) on an individual’s oral structures










- **Mini Textured Massager** – use to increase facial muscle tone
- **Five Vibe®** – use with the hyposensitive child
- **Z Vibe** – use to stimulate oral structures
- Vibrating toothbrushes

*Be sure to wear gloves when providing oral massage.*

### Who Can Benefit from Oral-Massaging Techniques?

Oral-massaging techniques may benefit individuals who:

-  • Have facial paralysis or weakness
-  • Exhibit incoordination (difficulty coordinating muscles of the face to perform a desired function such as eating)
-  • Have low muscle tone in the lips, tongue, and/or jaw
-  • Suck their thumb
-  • Drool
-  • Experience increased/decreased oral sensation or awareness
-  • Have difficulty swallowing



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(cont.)

## Why Use Oral-Massaging Techniques?



- Using deep pressure or touch massage helps a person who is overly sensitive to touch become calmer and more relaxed (Ayes, Robbins, & McAfee, 2005, p. 144).



- Providing touch and movement information helps an individual improve awareness and oral-motor function; “wakes-up” the mouth.



- Stimulating the immediate area of touch as well as the bone structures of the face through vibration, allows additional sensation/stimulation that activates the vestibular system (helps an individual feel body position and movement) (Ayes et al., p.144).



- Increases facial tone and range of motion.
- Provides additional sensory input.
- Helps decrease pain and oral-sensitivity.



- Increases muscle response of the lips, tongue, and jaw by “waking” them up.



**Related Handy Handouts®:**

[216 – “I Think My Child Might Have an Oral Fixation.”](#)

[179 – Oral-Motor Workout](#)

[101 – Help Your Child Break the Thumb Sucking Habit](#)

[522 – Mouth Breathing](#)

**Resources:**

Ayes, J. A., McAfee, S., & Robbins, J. (2005). Sensory integration and the child. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.  
Kranowitz, C.S. (1998). The out-of-sync child. New York: Penguin Putnam.

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