

# Emerge



## A Child's Place

Dec. 7, 2007

Occupational Therapy  
Speech Therapy

**Chapel Hill Office**  
205 Sage Rd, Ste 203  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
Phone: (919) 928-0204  
Fax: (919) 928-9423

**Durham Office**  
2919 Colony Rd  
Durham, NC 27705  
Phone: (919) 489-7333  
Fax: (919) 489-0504

Serving children from birth  
to 14 years old

Using therapy to improve  
conditions such as:

Delayed Speech  
Dyspraxia  
Speech Impairments  
Non-communicative Speech  
Oral/Verbal Apraxia  
Language Disorders  
Feeding Difficulties  
Autism/Asperger's/PDD  
Developmental Delay  
Cerebral Palsy  
Sensory Integration  
Disorders  
Sensory Modulation  
Disorders  
Handwriting Impairments  
Fine & Gross Motor Delays

A Private, Independent  
Provider

[www.EmergeAChildsPlace.com](http://www.EmergeAChildsPlace.com)

## S.O.S. – My Child is a Problem Eater



Bonnie Hacker, OT  
Founder / Director

Problem feeding and picky eating is a common problem among children, but 10 to 25% of parents become concerned enough about dietary intake to present the problem to their pediatricians.<sup>1</sup> For some children, problem feeding is more than just a normal stage of development. Aside from the family stress that can develop when every meal becomes a battle, studies have connected picky eating and problem feeding with decreased caloric intake<sup>2</sup>, delayed growth<sup>3</sup>, upper respiratory tract infections<sup>4</sup>, and susceptibility to chronic illness<sup>5</sup>. Some research suggests that picky eating is a consistent pattern evident even in infancy<sup>2</sup> and that some picky eaters do not improve with maturity.<sup>6</sup>

Childcare professionals and parents should know about a single, playful solution that works for many different feeding difficulties, the S.O.S. Method. The S.O.S. (Sensory-Oral-Sequential) Method expands each child's food repertoire, improves oral motor skills necessary for efficient self-feeding, and develops socially acceptable feeding behaviors that will increase a child's comfort with eating both in the home and in the community. The program focuses on increasing a child's comfort level exploring and learning about the different properties of foods including texture, taste, smell, and consistency. The S.O.S. Method follows a systematic desensitization hierarchy of skills and behaviors supported by sensory strategies that are necessary for children to eat a varied and healthy diet. For instance, a child's program may begin with working on tolerating food being in the room, then food being in the child's proximity, then touching, then tasting, then variations in properties.

At Emerge - A Child's Place, S.O.S. trained occupational therapists often conduct small groups that provide a fun, social environment for development. Emerge implements the S.O.S. method as a parent / child program with parents attending at least eight of ten sessions. One of the goals usually achieved is that a child will pick up a novel food and taste it 90% of the time.

Picky eating and problem feeding has a prevalence of up to 80% among developmentally delayed children, but developmentally normal children often have these challenges as well.<sup>5</sup> Some indicators that a particular child and family would benefit from the S.O.S. Method at Emerge include:

- Conflict over eating resulting in stress between parent and child
- Avoidance of all foods in a specific texture or food group
- Only eats hot or cold foods
- Slow growth: between the ages of 2 and 5 years, children typically gain between 2 lb 3 oz and 4 lb 6 oz per year
- Ongoing choking, gagging, or coughing during meals
- Food range of less than 20 foods, especially if foods are being dropped and not replaced with new foods
- The child refuses to eat at other people's houses, doesn't like eating in new restaurants, or resists foods simply because they are new.



## Emerge – The Place Children Prefer

At Emerge, children find spacious rooms, large windows, colorful surroundings, and lots of toys and playful equipment. In general, Emerge is a place children like at first sight and look forward to visiting again. Important therapy has never been so much fun.

**Please tell parents about Emerge – A Child's Place**  
**Believing in a Child's Potential to Flourish**

## References

1. Stanek K, Abbott D, Cramer S. "Diet quality and the eating environment of preschool children." *J Am diet Assoc* 1990; 90: 1582-4.
2. Jacobi C, Agras W, Bryson S, et al. "Behavioral validation, precursors, and concomitants of picky eating in childhood." *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2003; 42(1): 76-84.
3. Lindberg L, Ostberg M, Isacson I, et al. "Feeding disorders related to nutrition." *Acta Paediatr*. 2006; 95(4): 425-9.
4. Alarcon P, Lin L, Noche M, et al. "Effect of oral supplementation on catch-up growth in picky eaters." *Clinical Pediatrics (Phila)*. 2003; 42(3): 209-17.
5. Manikam R, Perman J. "Pediatric feeding disorders." *J Clin Gastroenterol*. 2000; 30(1): 34-46.
6. Carruth B, Skinner J. "Revisiting the picky eater phenomenon: neophobic behaviors of young children." *J Am Coll Nutr*. 2000; 19 (6): 771-80.