

# ROCHESTER RESEARCH ROUNDUP

## PARENT TRAINING FOR FEEDING PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Conducted at University of Rochester, University of Florida, and University of Pittsburgh

### WHAT did you study?

Researchers studied a parent training program to help with feeding and mealtime problems that are common for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

#### Parent training:

A type of intervention where **caregivers meet one-on-one with a therapist to learn strategies to use with their child**, which is different from therapy where a therapist works directly with a child. This approach may help support a child with different learning needs or high levels of problem behavior.

#### Feeding problems:

Being extra picky about food, such as food type, food textures, or food presentation (e.g., how food is cut up, how food is placed on a dish, what dish a food/drink is served in)

#### Mealtime behavior problems:

Refusing to eat, not sitting at the table, tantrums, hitting, swiping things off the table

### WHAT did you find?

- **Caregivers found this intervention acceptable** to address their child's feeding challenges **and were satisfied with the program**
- The study showed that parent training was able to be completed, **improved feeding outcomes**, and **decreased problem behavior at mealtime**

**94%**  
of parents would  
recommend this  
program to others

### WHY does it matter?

- Some children with ASD have feeding and mealtime behaviors that can be challenging
- **Caregivers can use strategies learned through this parent training program to support their child's feeding and mealtime behavior at home**

## HOW did you study it?

- The study compared two groups: caregivers receiving parent training now and caregivers waiting to receive parent training in the future.
- **Parent training sessions** occurred over 5 months and included 11 one-on-one sessions with a trained therapist, a home visit, and up to three coaching sessions. It also included a nutritional counseling session.
- During sessions, the **caregiver and therapist discussed behavior strategies**, such as preventing problem behaviors and teaching new mealtime skills.
- Before, during, and after the parent training sessions, the **study team asked caregivers to report back about their stress, their child's feeding challenges, and if they felt the intervention was helpful and easy to do.**



## What's next?

- **Repeat this program** with more caregivers, including those from more diverse backgrounds, to confirm this parent training model works for everyone.
- **Explore other options** to deliver parent training, like video conferencing or Telehealth, which may make it easier for families to participate.



## THE FULL ARTICLE CAN BE FOUND THROUGH THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Johnson, C. R., Brown, K., Hyman, S. L., Brooks, M. M., Aponte, C., Levato, L., Schmidt, B., Evans, V., Huo, Z., Bendixen, R., Eng, H., Sax, T., & Smith, T. (2018). Parent training for feeding problems in children with autism spectrum disorder: Initial randomized trial. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 44(2), 164–175. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpepsy/jsy063>.

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