FEEDING & NUTRITION SCREENING TOOL

The Feeding and Nutrition Screening Tool (FNST) for Children with Cerebral Palsy

Good nutrition is essential for children with cerebral palsy (CP) to reach their potential for growth and development. However, some children with CP may have difficulty gaining weight and may be underweight for their height and age. Difficulty gaining weight may be due to a number of reasons including difficulty consuming enough nutrition (food and fluids) to meet individual needs. The muscles of the mouth, face and throat may be impacted by CP and can cause difficulties eating and drinking enough food and fluids in a safe way. For these reasons, some children with CP may benefit from seeing a nutrition or feeding professional.

These screening questions are designed:

- For children aged 2-19 years with cerebral palsy
- To help identify if the child has any difficulties with their nutrition or feeding abilities
- To be completed by parents or primary carers who know the child well

The following four questions can help identify if your child may benefit from referral to a dietitian (about nutrition) and or a speech pathologist (about feeding difficulties).

Please answer these questions about your child:

1. Do you think your child is underweight? Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

2. Does your child have problems gaining weight? Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

3. Rate on a scale from 0 – 10, whether you think your child has any problems **eating** compared to other children of his/her age?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No problems Major Problems

4. Rate on a scale from 0 – 10, whether you think your child has any problems **drinking** compared to other children of his/her age?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No problems Major Problems

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Result:

Now that you have completed the questions, score 1 point per question for each of the following answers:

- ☐ 1. Yes or unsure
- ☐ 2. Yes or unsure
- ☐ 3. A value of 7 or higher
- ☐ 4. A value of 7 or higher
- ☐ 0 TOTAL

Overall scores:

An overall score of 3 or more means that your child may have feeding/swallowing difficulties that could impact on their feeding safety or they may have significant difficulty gaining weight.

For scores of 3 or 4, discuss your concerns about your child's feeding and/or weight gain with your child's main doctor. Your child may benefit from referral to see a nutrition or feeding professional for a full assessment or support.

For health professionals:

For scores of 3 or 4:

- Consider referral to a dietitian for a full nutrition assessment and/or a speech pathologist for a full feeding evaluation.

This screening tool was developed and validated in a group of 89 children with cerebral palsy.
You can read the full validation paper here (www.feedingnutritionscreeningtool.com)

Bell KL, Benfer KA, Ware RS, et al. Dev Med Child Neurol. 2019;61(10):1175-81.