

## MANAGING SALIVA

- Children learn to swallow their saliva as they acquire physical skills, like head and trunk control
- A child who has begun to manage their own saliva may temporarily lose some skill when they are learning new skills like walking and running
- Teething may increase drooling, this is usually temporary
- Sugary drinks may increase saliva production
- In typical development, control of saliva is learnt automatically

## DIFFICULTIES WITH SALIVA CONTROL

We produce approximately 1 ½ litres of saliva per day, that is up to 2000 swallows!

Good saliva control depends on:

- Trunk stability
- Good head control
- Awareness of need to swallow
- Complex coordination of swallowing and breathing

Children who have problems controlling their saliva may have difficulty with:

- Coordination of fine motor movement
- Additional sensory difficulties that reduce awareness of need to swallow
- A wet chin may feel 'normal'

## TRY THE FOLLOWING

### POSITION

Children should be well supported with an upright head, lips together and jaw supported by your hand if necessary, to increase stability. Good positioning is crucial to allow children to have as much control as possible.

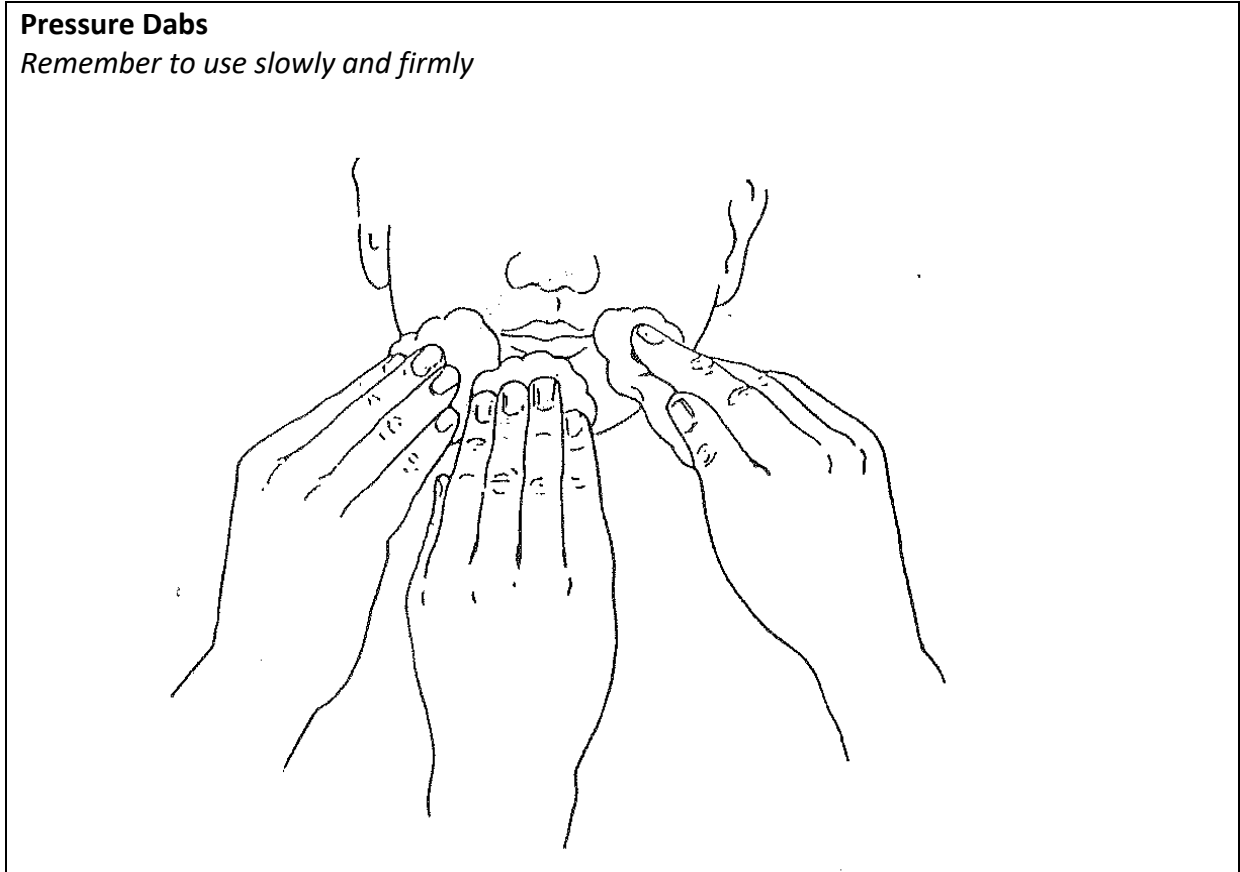
### WIPING THE MOUTH

Do **not**:

- Do not push the head back
- Do not wipe unless necessary
- Do not suddenly or quickly wipe the mouth with no warning
- Do not use a large cloth that touches other parts of the face as more stimulation may increase saliva production
- Do not tell the child to swallow – this is impossible if the mouth is open

**Do:**

- Do help the child to maintain good head and trunk position
- Do use a small tight wedge of absorbent material that will only touch the child's mouth area
- Do warn the child before wiping
- Do wipe slowly and firmly, using up to 3 '**pressure dabs**' as shown below
- Do try it on yourself, feel how this type of wipe encourages lip closure



**SELF – WIPING**

If a child is aware of saliva escape, but is unable to prevent it, try wearing sweatbands, as used by tennis players, to wipe with

**MOUTH AWARENESS**

Improved chewing patterns can help with saliva control

- For older children, try chewing sugar free gum for 5 minutes a day
- Try direct oral stimulation, e.g. massaging around the mouth gently to increase sensory feedback
- Gentle downward pressure on the upper lip may stimulate a swallow