

chewy tubes for speech therapy

Chewy Tubes for Speech Therapy: Enhancing Oral Motor Skills and Communication

chewy tubes for speech therapy are a simple yet highly effective tool used by speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to support children and adults who struggle with oral motor skills. These flexible, durable tubes provide a safe and engaging way to strengthen jaw muscles, improve biting and chewing abilities, and promote better control of the mouth and tongue—all of which are essential for clear speech and feeding development. If you're curious about how chewy tubes can make a difference in speech therapy, this article will guide you through their benefits, uses, and best practices.

What Are Chewy Tubes and How Do They Work?

Chewy tubes are typically made from soft, non-toxic silicone or similar materials designed to withstand biting pressure. They come in various sizes, textures, and firmness levels to suit different needs. The primary function of a chewy tube is to provide oral sensory input and resistance, encouraging users to bite, chew, and move their mouths in ways that build strength and coordination.

When a child or adult bites on the chewy tube, it activates the muscles around the jaw, lips, and tongue. This muscle engagement is crucial for individuals who have difficulty with articulation, feeding, or oral sensory processing. The repetitive chewing and biting motions help improve muscle tone and coordination, making everyday speech and eating tasks easier.

Benefits of Using Chewy Tubes in Speech Therapy

Chewy tubes offer a wide range of benefits that extend beyond just speech improvement. Here's why speech therapists often incorporate them into their sessions:

1. Strengthening Oral Muscles

One of the biggest challenges for many clients is weak or poorly coordinated oral muscles. Chewy tubes provide resistance that helps build strength in the jaw, tongue, and lips. This strengthening supports better control of articulation, leading to clearer pronunciation of words and sounds.

2. Improving Sensory Processing

Oral sensory processing is critical for speech and feeding. Some individuals are hypersensitive or hyposensitive to oral sensations, making it hard to manage textures or pressures in the mouth. Chewy tubes offer consistent proprioceptive input, which can help regulate sensory processing and reduce oral defensiveness.

3. Encouraging Safe Chewing Habits

For children who tend to bite on inappropriate objects or have difficulties chewing solid foods, chewy tubes provide a safe alternative. They help teach appropriate biting pressure and chewing motions, reducing the risk of injury or choking.

4. Supporting Feeding Therapy

Chewy tubes aren't just for speech—they're also valuable in feeding therapy. By enhancing jaw stability and oral motor control, they can make swallowing easier and reduce gag reflex sensitivity, facilitating smoother mealtimes.

How to Use Chewy Tubes Effectively in Therapy

Using chewy tubes correctly ensures maximum benefit and safety. Here are some tips that therapists and caregivers can follow:

Start with the Right Size and Texture

Chewy tubes come in a variety of sizes and firmness levels. Starting with a softer, larger tube is often best for beginners, especially young children or those with significant oral motor challenges. As strength and tolerance improve, therapists might introduce firmer or smaller tubes to increase difficulty.

Incorporate Fun and Motivation

Therapy works best when it's engaging. Encourage children to use chewy tubes during games, storytelling, or while listening to music. Turning exercises into play helps reduce resistance and improves consistency.

Combine with Other Oral Motor Activities

Chewy tubes should be part of a broader oral motor routine. Pair them with activities like blowing bubbles, practicing tongue movements, or lip exercises for a holistic approach to strengthening speech muscles.

Monitor Safety and Hygiene

Always supervise use to prevent choking or misuse. Chewy tubes should be cleaned regularly with

soap and water or disinfectant wipes to maintain hygiene. Replace tubes if they show signs of wear or damage.

Who Can Benefit Most from Chewy Tubes?

While chewy tubes are versatile, certain populations tend to benefit significantly from their use in speech therapy.

Children with Speech Delays or Disorders

Kids experiencing articulation difficulties, apraxia of speech, or other speech delays often need improved oral muscle control. Chewy tubes can aid in developing the foundational strength and coordination necessary for clearer speech.

Individuals with Sensory Processing Disorders

Children and adults with sensory processing challenges, including those on the autism spectrum, may find oral input calming and organizing. Chewy tubes provide consistent sensory feedback that can help them better tolerate oral stimulation.

Those with Feeding Difficulties

Feeding therapy clients who struggle with chewing, biting, or swallowing often find chewy tubes helpful. The tools promote safer oral motor skills, which can translate into more successful eating experiences.

People Recovering from Neurological Injuries

Stroke survivors or individuals with cerebral palsy and other neurological conditions may use chewy tubes to regain oral muscle tone and improve speech clarity over time.

Choosing the Best Chewy Tube for Your Needs

With so many options available, selecting the right chewy tube can feel overwhelming. Here are some factors to consider:

- **Material Safety:** Ensure the tube is made from BPA-free, food-grade silicone that is safe to chew on.

- **Size and Shape:** Larger tubes are usually better for beginners, while smaller tubes allow for more precise muscle work.
- **Texture Variety:** Some tubes have smooth surfaces, while others feature ridges or bumps to provide different sensory experiences.
- **Durability:** Look for chew tubes designed to withstand strong biting without cracking or breaking.
- **Ease of Cleaning:** Choose tubes that are dishwasher safe or easy to sanitize for regular use.

Many therapists recommend starting with a basic set and adjusting as progress is made. Brands like Chewigem, Ark Therapeutic, and others offer a variety of products tailored for speech therapy and oral motor development.

Integrating Chewy Tubes into Daily Routines

Consistency is key when working on oral motor skills. Incorporating chewy tubes into daily activities can accelerate progress and make therapy feel less clinical.

Using Chewy Tubes at Home

Parents and caregivers can encourage children to use chewy tubes during quiet times, like watching a favorite show or reading together. This not only reinforces therapy goals but also provides a calming sensory outlet.

Pairing with Speech Practice

Before or after speech practice sessions, using a chewy tube can “warm up” the muscles, making articulation exercises more effective. Think of it as a vocal warm-up for athletes.

Travel and On-the-Go Use

Chewy tubes are portable and discreet, making them excellent tools for use outside of therapy settings—like in the car or at school—to maintain oral motor engagement throughout the day.

Beyond Therapy: The Wider Impact of Chewy Tubes

It’s worth noting that chewy tubes can also support emotional regulation and self-soothing behaviors.

For individuals who seek oral input when anxious or overstimulated, having a designated safe chewing tool can reduce the need to bite on inappropriate objects like clothing or pencils.

Moreover, developing strong oral motor skills through chewy tube use can boost confidence in communication. When speech becomes clearer and feeding easier, individuals often experience improved social interactions and greater independence.

Exploring the use of chewy tubes for speech therapy opens up a world of possibilities for enhancing communication and feeding skills. Whether you're a therapist, parent, or caregiver, understanding the purpose and practical application of these simple tools can make a meaningful difference in the journey toward stronger oral motor function and more effective speech.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are chewy tubes used for in speech therapy?

Chewy tubes are used in speech therapy to help children and individuals develop oral motor skills by providing a safe and effective way to practice chewing, biting, and jaw strengthening exercises.

How do chewy tubes benefit children with sensory processing issues?

Chewy tubes offer sensory input that can help children with sensory processing issues regulate their oral sensory needs, reduce oral defensiveness, and improve focus during speech therapy sessions.

Are chewy tubes safe for all ages in speech therapy?

Chewy tubes are generally safe for children and adults when used under supervision, but it is important to choose the appropriate size and firmness level to suit the individual's age and oral motor needs.

Can chewy tubes help improve speech clarity?

Yes, chewy tubes can help improve speech clarity by strengthening the muscles used for articulation, enhancing jaw stability, and increasing oral awareness, which are essential for clear speech production.

How often should chewy tubes be used in speech therapy sessions?

The frequency of chewy tube use varies depending on individual therapy goals, but therapists typically recommend using them several times a day in short sessions to effectively build oral motor skills without causing fatigue.

Additional Resources

Chewy Tubes for Speech Therapy: Enhancing Oral Motor Skills and Communication

Chewy tubes for speech therapy have gained significant attention within clinical and educational settings as a practical tool for supporting individuals with oral motor difficulties. These specialized devices are increasingly incorporated by speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to address challenges related to speech articulation, sensory processing, and oral motor control. As a non-invasive intervention, chewy tubes offer a unique blend of sensory input and motor exercise that can facilitate improved communication outcomes for diverse populations, including children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), sensory processing disorder (SPD), and developmental delays.

Understanding Chewy Tubes and Their Role in Speech Therapy

Chewy tubes, often made from durable, food-grade silicone, are designed to be safely bitten and chewed without risk of damage or injury. Unlike typical toys or household items, these tubes provide a consistent and controlled resistance that helps strengthen the jaw muscles and improve oral motor function. The fundamental premise behind their use in speech therapy is that better oral motor control can lead to clearer articulation and enhanced ability to regulate oral sensory input.

Oral motor skills refer to the movements of the lips, tongue, jaw, and other structures necessary for speech production and feeding. Many individuals with speech sound disorders, apraxia of speech, or feeding difficulties exhibit weak or uncoordinated oral motor function. Chewy tubes serve as a therapeutic aid, allowing clients to practice repetitive jaw movements and develop proprioceptive awareness, which is critical for accurate speech production.

Key Features of Chewy Tubes for Speech Therapy

Several features distinguish chewy tubes from other oral motor tools or sensory chewables:

- **Material Safety:** Made from BPA-free, non-toxic silicone that withstands repeated biting and cleaning.
- **Varied Resistance Levels:** Available in multiple textures and firmness grades to suit different therapy needs and age groups.
- **Hygienic Design:** Often dishwasher safe and easy to sanitize, essential for clinical environments.
- **Ergonomic Shape:** Cylindrical or hollow tubes that encourage bilateral jaw movement and tongue placement.
- **Portability:** Lightweight and compact, allowing for use at home, school, or clinic.

These characteristics make chewy tubes an adaptable and user-friendly option for speech therapists seeking to integrate sensory and motor interventions seamlessly.

Applications and Benefits in Speech Therapy

Chewy tubes are primarily utilized to target oral motor strengthening and sensory regulation, which can indirectly impact speech clarity. Research and clinical reports suggest several benefits:

Oral Motor Strengthening and Coordination

Chewing on these tubes provides resistance that helps tone the muscles responsible for articulation, such as the masseter, temporalis, and orbicularis oris. Regular use can improve muscle endurance, reduce fatigue during speech tasks, and increase the precision of lip and jaw movements.

Sensory Input and Regulation

For individuals with sensory processing challenges, chewy tubes offer proprioceptive feedback that can help calm oral hypersensitivity or provide stimulation for under-responsive oral sensory systems. This regulation can result in reduced oral defensiveness, enabling better participation in speech tasks and oral feeding.

Speech Clarity and Articulation Support

While chewy tubes are not a direct articulation therapy tool, improving oral motor skills often correlates with enhanced speech intelligibility. For example, children with childhood apraxia of speech may benefit from increased jaw stability and control, which chewy tubes can facilitate.

Behavioral and Attention Benefits

In some cases, chewy tubes serve a dual role as sensory chew tools, helping users focus and reduce anxiety or restlessness during therapy sessions or classroom activities. This calming effect can indirectly support more productive communication efforts.

Comparative Perspectives: Chewy Tubes Versus Alternative Oral Motor Tools

The market offers a range of oral motor devices, including chewable jewelry, bite blocks, and pacifiers designed for therapy. Chewy tubes distinguish themselves in several ways:

- **Durability:** Compared to chewable necklaces or toys, chewy tubes typically last longer due to their robust silicone composition.
- **Resistance Variety:** The availability of different firmness levels allows therapists to tailor the challenge according to the client's progress.
- **Ease of Cleaning:** Many alternative tools may be porous or harder to sanitize, whereas chewy tubes are often dishwasher safe.
- **Functional Design:** The tubular shape encourages natural jaw movements and bilateral chewing, which bite blocks or flat chewables may not facilitate as effectively.

Nonetheless, chewy tubes may not be suitable for all clients. Some individuals might prefer or respond better to other sensory chewables depending on personal preferences or oral sensitivities.

Considerations and Potential Limitations

While chewy tubes offer numerous advantages, speech therapists and caregivers should be mindful of certain factors:

- **Supervision:** Especially with young children, close supervision is necessary to prevent choking hazards or misuse.
- **Adaptability:** Not all clients tolerate the texture or size, necessitating individualized assessment.
- **Complementary Use:** Chewy tubes work best as part of a comprehensive therapy plan that includes direct articulation and language interventions.
- **Cost:** Higher-quality chewy tubes can be more expensive than some alternative oral motor tools, potentially limiting accessibility.

Balancing these considerations with the therapeutic goals is essential for maximizing the benefits of chewy tube interventions.

Incorporating Chewy Tubes into Therapy Sessions

Effective integration of chewy tubes requires thoughtful planning. Speech-language pathologists often begin with an oral motor assessment to identify specific weaknesses or sensory needs. Based on these findings, they select the appropriate chewy tube resistance and incorporate it into targeted exercises such as:

1. **Jaw Strengthening:** Encouraging sustained biting or controlled jaw movements on the tube.
2. **Tongue Placement:** Using the tube as a platform for tongue elevation and lateralization exercises.
3. **Breath Control:** Coordinating chewing with breathing patterns to support speech fluency.
4. **Oral Sensory Activities:** Introducing the tube gradually to desensitize oral defensiveness.

Progress is monitored over time, adjusting the tool's firmness or introducing complementary methods as needed. Collaboration with caregivers ensures consistent use outside therapy sessions, enhancing generalization of skills.

Case Studies and Clinical Insights

Clinical reports highlight successful outcomes with chewy tubes in diverse populations. For example, children with ASD who exhibited oral defensiveness showed increased tolerance to oral stimuli after systematic chewy tube use. Similarly, pediatric clients with articulation delays demonstrated measurable improvements in jaw strength and speech intelligibility following regular oral motor exercises involving chewy tubes.

Such evidence underscores the value of these tools when integrated thoughtfully within individualized treatment plans.

Market Availability and Selecting the Right Chewy Tube

The growing demand for oral motor therapy products has led to a broad selection of chewy tubes available through therapy supply companies and online retailers. When choosing a chewy tube, practitioners consider:

- **Size and Shape:** Smaller sizes may suit younger children, while larger tubes accommodate older clients.
- **Texture:** Smooth versus ridged surfaces provide different sensory experiences.
- **Resistance Level:** Soft, medium, or firm options correspond to various strength requirements.
- **Durability and Warranty:** High-quality products often come with guarantees against wear and tear.

Brands such as Chewigem, Ark Therapeutic, and KONG offer trusted options that meet clinical standards. Therapists often trial multiple products to identify the best fit for individual client needs.

In the evolving landscape of speech therapy, chewy tubes have carved out a niche as a practical, evidence-informed tool that addresses fundamental oral motor challenges. While they are not a panacea for all speech difficulties, their role in strengthening muscles, providing sensory input, and supporting behavioral regulation makes them a valuable component of comprehensive therapy programs. With ongoing research and clinical innovation, chewy tubes continue to refine the ways speech-language pathologists can empower their clients toward clearer, more effective communication.

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scenarios, detailed review questions, and up-to-date coverage of current testing procedures and issues in pediatric development prepare you for the conditions you'll face in the clinical setting and provide an unparalleled foundation for professional success. Comprehensive coverage addresses the full spectrum of dysphagia to strengthen your clinical evaluation and diagnostic decision-making skills. Logical, user-friendly organization incorporates chapter outlines, learning objectives, case histories, and chapter summaries to reinforce understanding and create a more efficient learning experience. Clinically relevant case examples and critical thinking questions throughout the text help you prepare for the clinical setting and strengthen your decision-making skills. Companion Evolve Resources website clarifies key diagnostic procedures with detailed video clips.

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Lanier up to new understandings of what it means to be human, what it takes to be a mother, and above all, the aching joy and wonder that come from embracing the unique life of her rare girl.

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Nicole Watts Pappas, Sharynne McLeod, 2008-11-01 This book links research to clinical practice with studies of parents' perceptions of their involvement in their child's intervention, and their relationship with the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) being used to inform clinicians of the most effective ways of interacting with and involving parents in SLP intervention. A series of chapters covering the evidence base of effectiveness of parent and family involvement in different areas of SLP clinical practice also inform readers of what methods of parental involvement have been proven to increase child and family outcomes. Sections on practical tips for involving families and individual case studies facilitate the readers' knowledge of how to use family-friendly principles in practice.

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Marie R. Kerins, 2014-12-30

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Ken Siri, Tony Lyons, 2010-04-01 For parents of children with autism, research is a full-time job. For parents with limited time, ability, or resources to do this, Ken Siri and Tony Lyons have compiled the latest in autism theory, research, and treatment. Cutting-Edge Therapies for Autism contains contributions from more than eighty experts on a variety of therapies, models, and multifaceted evaluation and treatment centers. Each contributor gives the reader a basic description of the topic, including its scientific rationale, development, risks, and benefits. Siri and Lyons include the therapies of the future, focusing on current clinical trials, ongoing research, and the researchers striving to better understand autism and find new treatments.

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Jay Paul Willging, Claire Kane Miller, Aliza P. Cohen, 2019-12-09 Pediatric Dysphagia: Etiologies, Diagnosis, and Management is a comprehensive professional reference on the topic of pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders. Given that these disorders derive from abnormalities in the function and/or structure of the airway and digestive systems, multiple clinical specialists may be involved in the evaluation and management of affected children at any given point in time. Therefore, this text includes significant contributions from a wide range of experts in pediatric dysphagia, including all members of the Interdisciplinary Feeding Team at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center. These experts present an in-depth description of their roles in the diagnosis and management of dysphagic children, providing the reader with an understanding of why a multidisciplinary model of care is key to the optimization of outcomes. Pediatric Dysphagia is divided into five parts. In Part I, readers are provided with an overview of the embryologic development of aerodigestive structures that relate to swallowing, an introduction to neural organization related to swallowing function and physiologic aspects of swallowing, a synopsis of oral motor development, a discussion of the various etiologic categories of feeding and swallowing disorders, and an overview of genetic disorders associated with feeding and swallowing issues. Part II covers the clinical and instrumental assessment of patients, including the interdisciplinary feeding team infrastructure and function, the roles of individual members of the feeding team, the specific diagnostic tests commonly used in the assessment of feeding and swallowing issues, the classification of neonatal intensive care units, and the assessment and management of feeding and swallowing issues encountered in the neonatal intensive care unit. Part III focuses on the management of pediatric dysphagia, covering a wide range of treatment strategies and interventions for children with various categories of feeding disorders. Part IV includes an introduction to the concept of evidence-based practice and the application of evidence-based strategies in the management of dysphagia. Part V presents a brief overview of the role of ethics in healthcare and ethical considerations in the treatment of dysphagic children. In summary, the overall aim of this comprehensive text is to provide all pediatric professionals involved in the care of dysphagic patients with a basic understanding of the complexity of this disorder, the anatomic, neurologic, and physiologic components involved in this disorder, an overview of the diverse population of children who suffer with this disorder, and with a wide range of management

approaches based on patient needs and capabilities. The authors also address clinical problem solving and decision making, inspiring readers to develop multidisciplinary models of care at their own institutions.

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addition, it describes promising new deficit-reducing and skill-enhancing technologies on the horizon. Featured topics include: Developing and supporting the writing skills of individuals with ASD through assistive technologies. The ways in which visual organizers may support executive function, abstract language comprehension and social learning. Do-as-I'm-doing situations involving video modeling and autism. The use of technology to facilitate personal, social and vocational skills in youth with ASD. Evidence-based instruction for students with ASD. The use of mobile technology to support community engagement and independence. Technology and Treatment of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is an essential resource for clinicians and related professionals as well as researchers and graduate students across such disciplines as child and school psychology, rehabilitation medicine, educational technology, occupational therapy, speech pathology and social work.

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chewy tubes for speech therapy: Sensory-Being for Sensory Beings Joanna Grace, 2017-07-14 Sensory-being: the enveloping of natural presentness and awareness in an unfolding sensory moment. Sensory Beings: people whose experience of the world, and meaning within it, is primarily sensory. Often these are people who do not have access to language. If you support someone who understands the world in a primarily sensory way, for example someone with PMLD or later stage dementia, you will recognise that they often face periods of time in which they are left without an activity they can access. This unique, practical guide helps you to plan and deliver sensory activities that lead people into a calm, focused state. You are even invited to let the person you support lead you into a state of sensory focus. Written by a leading sensory specialist this book will help you to: View the world as the person you support may view it, and identify times when a sensory-being activity may be appropriate. Understand how to select and create the most engaging, low cost, sensory foci to suit the specific needs of the individuals in your care. Effectively facilitate sensory-being sessions from start to finish so that the people you care for receive the full and many

benefits of calm, focused time. Tried and tested in a diverse range of settings prior to publication, these techniques and practical tools have already helped many people provide an enriched experience of life for those in their care. Throughout the book you will find numerous case studies and insights from parents, carers, special school practitioners, therapists, research institutions and more so that you can benefit from this broad body of experience.

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