

# PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

## What is Prader-Willi Syndrome?

- A genetic disorder that occurs on the 15<sup>th</sup> chromosome
- It affects males and females equally
- This disorder may result in:
  - Decreased ability to regulate satisfaction with eating
  - Difficulty feeding in infancy
  - Sleep abnormalities
  - Early onset of obesity
- A hallmark sign is compulsive eating (e.g., stealing or hoarding food)

## Physical Features

- Short stature
- Almond-shaped eyes
- Small, broad feet and narrow hands
- Thin upper lip
- Small mouth with lips turned down at the corners

## Impact on Development

- Presents in infancy with a decreased suck reflex – leads to difficulty with feeding
- Child often appears lethargic with a decreased reaction to stimulation – this tends to decrease after the first year
- Intellectual:
  - Typically a mild to moderate cognitive delay, which leads to learning difficulties
- Motor:
  - Decreased muscle tone reduces child's strength
  - Major milestones (e.g. walking) may be delayed or take twice as long
- Speech and Language:
  - Typically ability to understand language is better than expression (speech)
  - May have smaller vocabularies, difficulty with correct production of sounds, and difficulty with voicing
  - Social interaction may also be difficult



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## Other Areas of Concern

- Choking from eating too quickly
- Recurrent respiratory infections
- Sleep apnea
- Infections from picking at skin
- Aggressive and self-harming behaviors
- Type II diabetes resulting from obesity

## Classroom Modifications

- Use a picture schedule to ease transitions between activities
- Provide a classroom aide to help the child pay attention
- Closely monitor child during snack and mealtimes
- Properly store food to discourage excess eating
- Establish firm rules to reduce behavioral issues
- Provide directions in short and simple phrases

## Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Provide early intervention services when the child shows a delay in speech or language development
- Arrange child's environment to teach communication skills
- Increase use of complete and grammatically correct sentences
- Structure therapy goals so they are functional for social and conversational skills
- Support child's ability to communicate in a socially appropriate manner

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.pwsausa.org/basic-facts/>



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