Chewing Gum and Focus

How strong chewing can help your child feel calm, alert and ready to learn.

Some days your child's body runs too fast to sit and learn. Other days it runs too slow. Strong chewing can help with both.

Why chewing helps

Hard chewing is heavy work for the mouth. As the jaw muscles and joints push and pull, they send steady signals to the brain. The brain uses those signals to bring the body to a calm, alert, ready-to-learn level. The same chewing can settle a child who is wound up and wake up a child who feels sluggish.

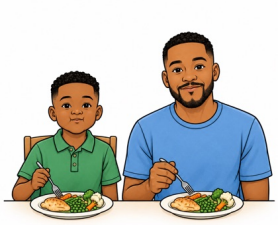
Trying to focus on willpower alone is tiring, and it is hard to keep up for a whole school day. Heavy work for the body does much of that job for your child.

Easy ways to add chewing



Sugar-free gum

Offer a piece during homework, reading or other work that takes focus, if your child is ready for gum.



Crunchy and chewy snacks

Try apple slices, pretzels, bagels, dried fruit or cheese sticks before homework or at snack time. Cut foods to a safe size for your child.



Thick drinks through a straw

Sipping a smoothie or yogurt drink through a straw gives the mouth a workout too.

More heavy work that helps

- Carrying groceries or a laundry basket
- Pushing a wagon or cart
- Wall push-ups
- Squeezing stiff putty

SAFETY

- Give gum only to children who will chew it without swallowing it. This is usually school-age kids. Ask your therapist if your child is ready.
- Choose sugar-free gum to protect your child's teeth.
- Stay close to younger children during snacks, and watch for foods that could cause choking.
- Check your child's school rules about gum.

TIP

Notice what works. Try chewing before or during hard tasks, and watch whether your child seems calmer and more focused.

Always follow the plan your Oaklin Lane therapist made for your child.