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Marloes Lagarde, MSc. is speech language therapist and PhD student in the Radboud university medical center in Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

Her clinical work is related to infants and children with a wide range of feeding and swallowing problems. Her PhD project is about the added value of instrumental measurements in the diagnosis of pediatric dysphagia.

Aspects of neonatal feeding

Adequate nutritional intake in neonates is essential for proper growth and development. Infants receive their nutrition by nutritive sucking during breastfeeding or bottle feeding.

Normal neonatal nutritive sucking is a complex activity consisting of well-coordinated sucking, swallowing and breathing.

The development of nutritive sucking starts in the prenatal period.

With the influence of feeding reflexes, infants are capable of nutritive sucking and swallowing during the first months of their life. After the age of 2-3 months feeding reflexes disappear. Important aspects of nutritive sucking during the first months of life will be discussed in detail during this presentation; the changing anatomy, the suck-swallow-breath ratio, the coordination of inhalation and exhalation with swallowing, the movement of the tongue and the influences of different teats on these aspects.