

Feeding Tiny Humans: Strategies for "Typical" to Troubled Premature and Medically Complex Babies

Shanna Semmler, OTD, OTR/L, CNT, NTMTC

Faculty

Shanna M. Semmler, OTD, OTR/L, CNT, NTMTC is an Occupational Therapist who has spent her entire career helping premature infants and full-term infants with medical complexities and/or birth trauma achieve their maximal potential. For the last 14 years, she has worked in an academic medical center Level IV NICU helping infants born as early as 22 weeks. Shanna received her Doctor of Occupational Therapy from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis in 2004. She is a Certified Neonatal Therapist, Certified Level III Neonatal Touch and Massage Therapist and a member of the National Association of Neonatal Therapists. She's provided nursing and physician training sessions regarding current feeding practices and serves as a mentor to feeding therapists within her health system.

Financial Disclosure: Shanna Semmler receives an honorarium from Education Resources, Inc.

Non-Financial Disclosure: Shanna Semmler has no non-financial disclosures to report.

Audience

PTs, OTs, or SLPs working with Pediatric, NICU or Feeding & Swallowing populations.

About this Live Webinar

Learn to evaluate infant feeding performance and provide evidence-supported interventions to maximize infants' outcomes. We'll discuss diagnostic tools for bedside evaluation, cervical auscultation, modified barium swallow studies and specific medical comorbidities seen in the NICU setting and how these influence the therapy pathway. In addition, we'll review the International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative and its impact on infant oral feeding. The developmental specialists' role in oral motor assessment and interventions to support infant feeding in the NICU will be discussed including how to support infants' care team members in providing best practice care. This course will include lecture, small group discussion, and clinical scenarios with video to enhance observation skills of attendees.

Learning Objectives

- Identify infant phases of swallow
- Identify anatomical structures related to infant swallow mechanisms
- Relate how anatomical structures support safe swallow
- Relate how specific medical co-morbidities impact feeding performance
- Select which infants are and are not appropriate to complete oral feeding based on level of respiratory support and gestational age
- Decide which evidence-based assessment tool to use to evaluate an infant's swallow
- Interpret results of observations to plan appropriate clinical intervention techniques
- Select safe oral feeding viscosity based on reported diagnostic assessment
- Develop a treatment plan to support an infant's oral motor skill acquisition based on the results of different oral motor assessments
- Choose nonpharmacological interventions to support infants exhibiting Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) and/or Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS)
- Select bottle/nipple to match infants' skill level, support breastfeeding goals, and take into consideration any applicable medical comorbidities.
- Identify differences in feedings schedules currently in practice in NICUs
- Identify different environmental supports, feeding techniques, bottle choices and nutritional varieties for infants with symptomatic reflux
- Identify when to recommend an alternative feeding method to support infant nutrition, development and long-term success

Help your patients achieve better outcomes.

Schedule – Day 1 9:40 am - 4:30 pm EST (US)

9:40 - 10:00 Webinar Registration/Zoom Course Open

Day 1 will include a 30 minute lunch break. Agenda is as follows:

10:00 – 2:30 Factors Affecting Infant Feeding Success

- Gestational age at birth: Developmental Considerations
- Phases of Swallow (in infants specifically)
- Swallow Anatomy (include diagrams of each structure)
- Medical comorbidities
- Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- Number of required medical interventions
 - Need for intubation, length of time with ETT, number/incidence (traumatic or not) of intubations
 - Gastrointestinal tolerance of enteral feedings
- Presence of an involved, attentive caregiver

2:30 – 4:30 Assessment

- Observation of infant vital signs at rest
- Oral motor assessment with gloved finger
- Oral motor assessment with pacifier
- Staged progression of fluid introduction

Schedule – Day 2 9:40 am - 4:30 pm EST (US)

9:40 – 10:00 Webinar Registration/Zoom Course Open

Day 2 will include a 30 minute lunch break. Agenda is as follows:

10:00 – 3:30 Intervention

- Infant Massage
- Oral motor/Pre-feeding Interventions
 - Neonatal Oral-Motor Assessment Scale- NOMAS Majorie Meyer Palmer
 - Premature Infant Oral MOTor Intervention- PIOMI Brenda Lessen
 - Beckman Oral Motor Protocol- Debra Beckman
- Feeding interventions
 - Supportive Swaddle/Containment- In What? Why? How?
 - Positioning
 - Supported Upright
 - Left Side Lying and Modified Left Side Lying
 - Right Side Lying (point out particularly for infants with h/o PDA ligation) and Modified Right Side Lying
 - Bottle Selection to support breastfeeding goals
 - Nipple Selection (continued below...)

Schedule – Day 2 ...continued

- Supportive Techniques- Completed/provided by the feeder
 - Positioning of infant
 - Chin support
 - Cheek support
 - Mandibular traction
 - Traction to nipple/bottle
 - Downward pressure to tongue blade
 - Cervical traction
 - External pacing
- Supportive Techniques related to fluid viscosity
 - Cold- trigger quicker response in oral phase
 - International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative: IDDSI
 - “Old School:” Thin, Nectar and Honey consistencies
 - Thickening Agents:
 - Gel based: Simply Thick®, Gel Mix®
 - Starch based: Infant cereals, baby food, Thicken Up®, Thick-It®
- Diagnostic feeding evaluations
 - Cervical Auscultation
 - Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study -VFSS/ Modified Barium Swallow Study -Mbss
 - Fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing -FEES
 - Discuss pros and cons and training available

Schedule – Day 2 ...continued

- Neuromuscular Electrical Stimulation-NMES - currently no support of electrical stimulation on high risk infants to improve swallow function
- Different feeding schedules
 - Scheduled based on time- Medically driven (q 1, q 2, q 3 hour feedings)
 - Cue-based- feeding based on infant cues with a q 12 or q 24 hour volume that must be achieved
 - Infant Driven Feedings ®- based on infant cues with a 12 hour volume, q 2-2.5 hour and q 3- 3.5 hour volumes based on the time the infant last started a feeding. Do not need to reach 100% of these volumes, instead reach 80%.
 - Behavioral Cue-Based Oral (BCBO)
- Oral Aversion, infants “shutting down”

3:30 – 4:30 Alternative Feeding Devices

- Nasogastric feeding tubes- different practices at different hospitals and with different diagnoses
- Nasojejunal feeding tubes
- Gastrostomy tube

ERI: Life-changing learning

You love what you do. Our courses remind you why. As a therapist, you change lives every day – and have your life changed in return. ERI is life-changing learning, for therapists by therapists.

The ERI Advantage

- Techniques you'll use the next day
- Peers who share your passion
- Renowned faculty
- Evidence-based courses that improve outcomes
- 30 years of life-changing learning

Specialty Tracks

Learn with courses throughout the lifespan – neonatal, pediatric, adult and geriatric. Each ERI specialty track is designed to make the most of your continuing education time, budget, and goals. Start your search with us and plan every course you'll take in 2026.

ERI Rewards*

Your ERI experience is more rewarding than ever:

- First course discount
- Bring a friend savings
- Group discounts
- \$100 off your 4th multi-day course

*Subject to availability. Exclusions may apply.
Visit our website for details and coupon codes.

Visit educationresourcesinc.com
for all your 2026 course needs.

Credits

This course meets the criteria for 12 contact hours (1.2) CEUs, Intermediate Level.



Education Resources Inc. is an AOTA Approved Provider of professional development. Course approval ID# 05145. This Distance Learning Interactive Course is offered at 12 contact hours, 1.2 CEUs. (Intermediate level, OT Service Delivery). AOTA does not endorse specific course content, products or clinical procedures.

This course can be used toward your NBCOT renewal requirements.
Approved provider of the **FL** Board of Occupational Therapy-CE Broker.
This course meets the approval of the **TX** Board of OT Examiners



Education Resources, Inc.
Intermediate Level
1.2 ASHA CEUs

ASHA CE Provider (Intermediate level) 1.2 ASHA CEUs. ASHA CE Provider approval and use of the Brand Block does not imply endorsement of course content, specific products, or clinical procedures.

Application has been made to the **FL** Physical Therapy Association. Accreditation of this course does not necessarily imply the FPTA supports the views of the presenter or the sponsors.

Approved by the **MD** Board of Physical Therapy Examiners.

Approved by the **MN** Board of Physical Therapy.

Approved by the **NJ** Board of Physical Therapy Examiners.

Approved sponsor by the State of **IL** Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for Physical Therapy. Application has been made to Illinois EI Training Program.

Approved provider by the **NY** State Board of Physical Therapy.

This course meets the criteria for 12 hours that can be applied toward the Neonatal Therapy National Certification.

Education Resources, Inc. is an approved provider for Physical Therapy CEUs in the following states: **CA, NM, OK** and **TX**.

The following state boards of physical therapy accept other states' approval: **AK, AR, AZ, DC, DE, GA, HI, ID, IN, KS, KY, MA, MI, MO, MS, NC, OR, PA, RI, SC, UT, VA, VT, WI, WY**. The following state boards of physical therapy either do not require course pre-approval or do not require CEUs for re-licensure: **AL, CO, CT, IA, ME, MT, NE, ND, NH, SD, WA**.

Education Resources Inc. 266 Main St, Suite 12, Medfield, MA 02052 • 800-487-6530

Webinar Dates and Times

May 1 and 2, 2026

9:40 am EST • 8:40 am CST • 7:40 am MST • 6:40 am PST (US)

Registration is for both sessions. Zoom log-in instructions and course materials will be emailed/added to your ERI account 5-7 days prior to the first date of the webinar.



\$389 fee. **LIMITED ENROLLMENT.** Cancellation will be accepted until 14 days prior to the start date of the course, minus a \$75 Administration Fee. There will be NO REFUNDS after this 14-day deadline. We encourage you to register online!

LIVE WEBINAR: Feeding Tiny Humans: Strategies for "Typical" to Troubled Premature and Medically Complex Babies – Shanna Semmler

☐ May 1 and 2, 2026

Course Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Needed in the event of an emergency scheduling change

Email: _____

Please clearly print your email address for course confirmation

Employer: _____

Discipline: _____ Specialty: _____

How did you learn of this course? _____

Education Resources reserves the right to cancel any course due to insufficient registration or extenuating circumstances. We are not responsible for any expenses incurred by participants if the course must be cancelled.

☐ I have read your refund policy above and understand.

Cardholder's name & billing address with zip code if different from above:

Signature _____

Amount charged _____

I hereby authorize you to charge my: ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ DISCOVER# _____

Exp. Date _____ CVV2 Code _____