

Anorexia in infancy and childhood

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Anorexia (or loss of appetite) is a daily problem for the parents and for the physician who treats children. There are many afferent signals vary in their nature and origin may reach the hypothalamic centers of appetite and alter their activities. Physiologic anorexia is common in the 2nd year of life and preschool period due to the normal decelerated rate of growth. Psychogenic anorexia is the most common type of anorexia in children. Food forcing is the most common cause of psychogenic anorexia. Anorexia due to acute illness is transitory but prolonged if associated with chronic organic illness. In physiologic anorexia, physician must explain to the mother the relationship between the child's appetite and his rate of growth. The feeding behavior of the child must be respected, the self-demand feeling for infants is essential. In anorexia due to organic illness, the best approach is treatment of the underlying cause. Iron therapy is necessary for pica. Tricyclic antidepressant drugs (amitriptyline) improve anorexia. The behavior modification is useful method for treatment of anorexia nervosa. The medical therapy depends on a baseline of complete deprivation, then positive enforcement is added by obtaining rewards for weight gain and normal eating behaviors