

Jaw-strengthening teether designed for children with Down syndrome

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Hannah Ferrill, a Purdue University alumna in industrial design from Purdue's College of Liberal Arts, has developed a jaw-strengthening teether for children with Down syndrome. Credit: Purdue University

A new product may assist infants with Down syndrome to eat and speak sooner by strengthening their jaw and tongue muscles.

Children with Down syndrome may be born with low muscle tone and a protruding tongue, which makes it more challenging to speak and eat. Hannah Ferrill, a Purdue University alumna in [industrial design](#) from Purdue's College of Liberal Arts, has developed a jaw-strengthening teether. The teether is named Jon, after Ferrill's older brother who was born with Down syndrome and passed away several months after birth.

"My mom expressed to me that she could not find any products that were designed for my brother," Ferrill said. "After researching, I found that there were still few products out there and I knew I wanted to do something to change that."

Ferrill created the teether as part of her senior thesis project at Purdue. She worked with Stephanie Garner, a program coordinator with [Down Syndrome Indiana](#), to interview parents. Ferrill discovered that most wanted something simple that could be used outside of the [therapy sessions](#) their children were taking.

The teether is shaped like a teddy bear with two pads for ears. The ears encourage the child to bite down upon them by playing music and lighting up the teether. It also includes a section made with [silicone gel](#) to be used in the freezer to provide [pain relief](#) for teething babies.

"I would love for this teether to make it into the hands of new parents and babies when they are born," Ferrill said. "I hope this teether can be a beautiful way to help them celebrate their precious new life."

Ferrill said she hopes the teether might be included one day soon in the DSI new parent packages given to families. She said that the teether is blue and yellow to resemble the Down syndrome awareness colors.

Provided by Purdue University

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