

**From:** Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverychild.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:22 PM  
**To:** scott@afamilyforeverychild.org  
**Subject:** Pica

**A Family For Every Child**  
**Matching Assistance**



*"We should not be asking who this child belongs to,  
but who belongs to this child."*

Dear

Pica is defined as the consumption of non-food objects. While young children may be curious and put non-food objects in their mouth from time to time, pica is diagnosed when it becomes persistent and compulsive and lasts for more than one month. The causes of pica vary, but there is a link between malnutrition and pica. Children in foster care often come from families who live in poverty, and/or from families where they were not fed regularly due to neglect.

#### Signs of Pica

- Repetitive consumption of nonfood items, despite efforts to restrict it, for a period of at least 1 month or longer
- The behavior is considered inappropriate for your child's age or developmental stage (older than 18 to 24 months)
- The behavior is **not** part of a cultural, ethnic, or religious practice

#### Causes of Pica

Parental neglect, lack of supervision and food deprivation are all causes of pica as it relates to children in foster care. Other causes include developmental delays, nutritional deficiencies, and mental health conditions.

#### Treatments

Work with a trusted doctor and a child's therapist on getting the child to stop eating non-food items. Take preventative measures by locking away non-food items that the child eats frequently. Having patience is also key, as it can take awhile before a child's pica is completely treated.

#### Sources

Kid's Health: [Pica](#)

American Bar: [Healthy Nutrition for Kids in Foster Care](#)

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