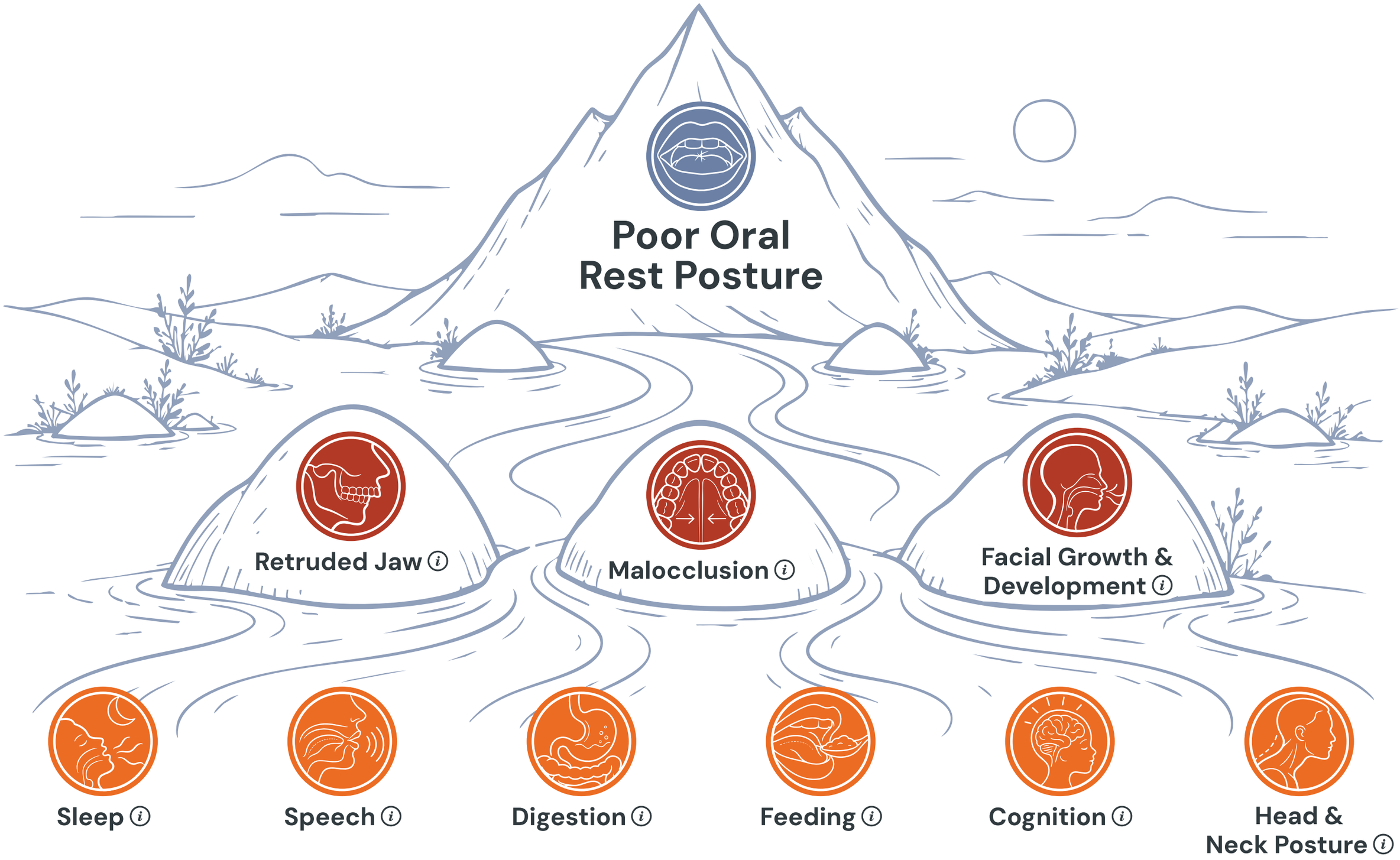


The downstream effects of oral dysfunction

The way we breathe, position our tongue, and use our oral muscles can influence far more than our mouths. Explore how oral dysfunction relates to growth, breathing, sleep, and everyday function.

AOMT

More at **aomtinfo.org**



Retruded Jaw

A lower jaw (mandible) that sits farther back can affect tongue position and the space available for breathing. Poor oral rest posture and altered muscle function can also influence jaw development during childhood, creating a relationship between facial structure, breathing, and oral function.



Malocclusion

The tongue, lips, and cheeks help guide tooth position and dental arch development through gentle, continuous pressure. When the tongue rests low or the lips remain apart, these forces can become imbalanced, contributing to crowded teeth, narrow dental arches, and bite problems.



Facial Growth & Development

The way we breathe and position our tongue influences how the face and jaws develop, especially during childhood. Persistent mouth breathing and poor tongue posture can contribute to changes in palatal width, dental arch development, and facial growth patterns.



Sleep

Tongue position, jaw structure, and breathing patterns can influence airway stability during sleep. Oral dysfunction may coexist with sleep-disordered breathing, contributing to disrupted sleep, daytime fatigue, and difficulties with attention and behavior.



Speech

Clear speech requires coordinated movement of the tongue, lips, and jaw. Poor tongue posture and altered oral muscle function can contribute to certain speech sound distortions, including lisps and difficulty producing sounds such as /s/, /z/, and /r/.



Digestion

Digestion begins in the mouth, where chewing and saliva break down food and prepare it for swallowing. Poor tongue function and inefficient chewing can interfere with this first stage of digestion, affecting how effectively food is prepared for the digestive system.



Feeding

Eating requires coordinated movements of the tongue, lips, jaw, and swallowing muscles. Oral dysfunction can make it difficult to chew effectively, manage different food textures, and move food safely through the mouth, contributing to feeding challenges and prolonged mealtimes.



Cognition

Healthy breathing and restorative sleep support memory, attention, learning, and emotional regulation. When oral dysfunction is associated with airway restrictions or disrupted sleep, it can indirectly affect cognitive function, particularly in developing children.



Head & Neck Posture

Breathing, tongue position, and jaw function are closely connected to head and neck posture. Individuals with airway restrictions or habitual mouth breathing may adopt a forward head position to help facilitate breathing, contributing to altered muscle activity and postural strain.