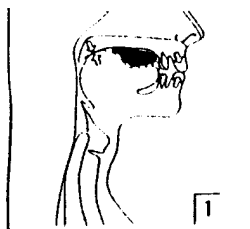
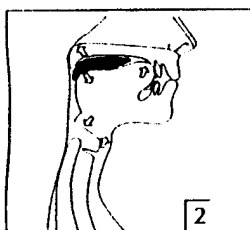


## The Normal Swallow



### Stage 1

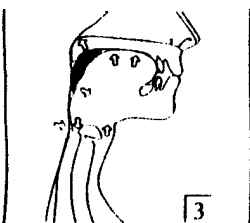
- The mouthful of food is centered on tongue
- Lips are together
- Palate and tongue seal off the mouth from the nose
- We breathe IN through the nose



### Stage 2

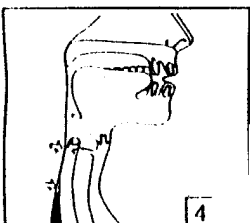
- The mouthful is pushed into the pharynx (throat) by the tongue.
- The nose is sealed off by the palate
- The swallow reflex begins
- Larynx (voice box) rises and tilts the epiglottis down to

help close the airway.



### Stage 3

- Airway sealed off to stop food entering the lungs
- Larynx reaches highest position in the neck and helps in the opening of the upper oesophagus
- The pharynx muscles squeeze the mouthful towards oesophagus



### Stage 4

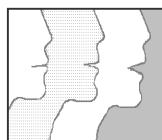
- Food enters oesophagus
- Larynx drops to rest and the airway is opened.
- We breathe out

## Signs that there may be a swallowing difficulty:

- coughing when drinking or eating
- choking on food
- difficulty breathing during or after meals
- taking a long time to eat meals
- food spilling from the mouth while eating
- not eating as much as usual
- food left in the mouth after swallowing
- drooling
- wet or gurgly voice after swallowing
- slurred speech
- recurrent chest infections or pneumonia
- fever and cough
- weight loss

If any of these are noted more than once, you should contact your local doctor and a Speech Pathologist.

Carers should have knowledge of First Aid.

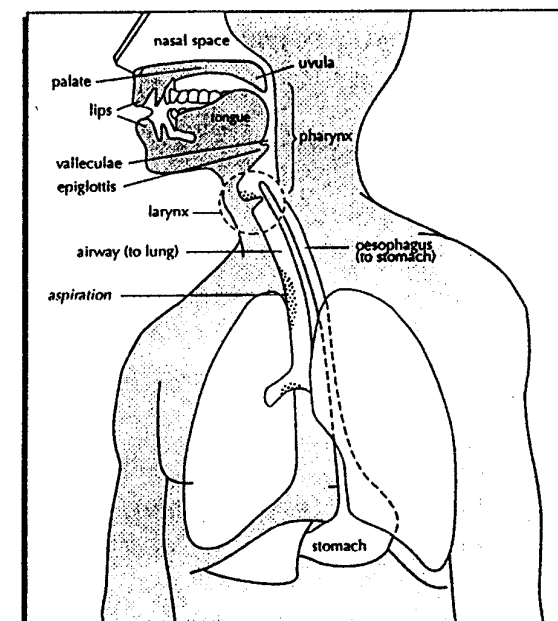


This brochure accompanies  
"The Swallowing Video", available from  
**Speech Pathology Department**  
**Prince Henry and Prince of Wales**  
**Hospitals**  
**Randwick NSW 2031**  
phone 02 9382 2883 or fax 02 9382 2868

From

# The Swallowing video

A carer's guide to safe swallowing



# Eat and Drink Safely

Swallowing is more complicated than we think. It involves coordinating a large number of structures and muscles. We swallow more than 3,000 times a day without thinking.

When we swallow, food, drink and saliva moves past the airway, through the oesophagus, and into the stomach. If any part of this process breaks down the swallow is affected. Strokes, age, diseases and injuries to the head or neck, dementia, and respiratory illnesses can lead to problems swallowing.

A swallowing problem can lead to chest infections, pneumonia, choking and even death. It is important to lower the risk of food or drink going into the airway and lungs (which is called aspiration).

The Speech Pathologist may suggest strategies according to each person's needs. By understanding how we swallow and following instructions regarding diet textures and body posture, and special swallowing techniques, carers can make sure mealtimes are safe.

## For safest mealtimes:

*These points will help to reduce the risk of food or drink entering the lungs and causing choking or pneumonia.*

1. The person must be awake and alert, without distractions such as television
2. Check dentures are in
3. Sit the person upright with their head bent slightly forward.



4. Remind them of any special swallowing strategies given by the Speech Pathologist.

5. Be careful to only give the kinds of food and drink recommended by the Speech Pathologist.
6. Supervise and assist the person to feed themselves whenever possible. Check that they are taking small mouthfuls at a safe pace.
7. If they are not allowed to drink water, pills and tablets can be taken with food or thick fluids instead. Sometimes having them crushed or as a syrup is helpful (check with your pharmacist first because not all pills can be crushed).
8. If their voice begins to sound gurgly, encourage them to clear their throat or cough.
9. Teeth should be cleaned after meals. This reduces bacteria in the mouth and saliva, which can cause infection.
10. They should remain sitting upright for at least 20 minutes after the meal