

Dysphagia

(problems with swallowing)

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Eating and drinking can become difficult because of strokes, age, breathing problems, dementia, or damage to the head and neck. Food or drinks can go down the wrong way (known as aspiration) and cause choking, chest infections, pneumonias, and even death. This resource provides tips on how to stay safe when eating and drinking.

Signs of difficulty swallowing:

- Food or drink spilling from the mouth or nose when eating or drinking.
- Food left in the mouth after swallowing.
- Coughing when eating or drinking.
- Having trouble breathing during or after meals.
- Wet sounding voice after swallowing.
- Fevers, chest infections or pneumonia.

Ways for you to make eating or drinking safer:

- Only have food or drinks which are safe for you.
- Only eat and drink when awake.
- Sit up straight when eating and drinking. Sitting in a chair is best.
- Stay sitting up straight for 20 minutes after eating and drinking.
- Check dentures fit well.
- Take small mouthfuls. Eat and drink slowly.
- Make sure you keep your teeth and mouth very clean.

Your speech pathologist has recommended that you eat and drink the following types of food and drinks.

The safest types of food for you are:

<input type="checkbox"/> Normal food	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft food	<input type="checkbox"/> Minced food	<input type="checkbox"/> Pureed food
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The safest types of drinks for you are:

<input type="checkbox"/> NORMAL DRINKS	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 150 MILDLY-THICK (Nectar-thick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 400 MODERATELY-THICK (Honey-thick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 900 EXTREMELY-THICK (pudding-thick)
	Drinks run quickly off the spoon but leave a small coating on the spoon 	Drinks slowly drip in dollops off the end of the spoon 	Drinks sit on the spoon and do not flow off it. 
	<input type="checkbox"/> DO NOT drink normal drinks, for example: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water, tea, coffee, milk, juice, cordial, soft drink, alcohol. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jelly, ice-cream, ice-cubes – these melt in the mouth and become a normal drink which can go down the wrong way. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Some soups, yoghurts and custards – these may be too thin.		

For further information about swallowing ask your speech pathologist. Talk to your speech pathologist before you change your diet.

Interpreter Services

Professional interpreters are available if you need help understanding or speaking in English. You may have a family member or friend present, but all communication about your treatment should be through a professional interpreter. Interpreter services are free and confidential. Please ask if you need an interpreter. The staff will arrange the interpreter for you.

If you need to use an interpreter to contact us, please call the telephone Translating and Interpreter Service on 131 450.