

Adult Speech & Language Therapy

Thickening Drinks – Level 1, Slightly Thick Liquid

You have been prescribed a drink thickener because thin fluids are unsafe for you to swallow.

Thin fluids travel quickly through the mouth and throat. This can sometimes result in them falling into the trachea (airway) or 'going the wrong way'. This is known as **aspiration**. It can also occur with food.

Thickening fluids can sometimes help by keeping the fluid together in a 'ball', or can slow the fluid down, allowing the swallowing muscles to 'catch up'.

Thickened fluids should only be recommended after a swallowing assessment by a Speech and Language Therapist. Your doctor can prescribe the thickener for you.

Drinks are thickened with commercial thickeners, for example, *Thick & Easy*, *Nutlis* or *Resource*. They are starch or gum based powders that come in tins or sachets.



Use this leaflet in conjunction with the instructions which come with your prescribed thickener.



Level 1 Thick Fluid – “Slightly” thick

Not everyone needs their fluids thickening to the same consistency. How thick the drink needs to be depends on the person’s swallowing difficulty.

It can also be difficult to prescribe the number of scoops of powder required, due to differences between fluids, e.g. hot and cold fluids thicken differently.

Instead we describe the consistency we are trying to achieve.



Level 1 Thick Fluid

- Thicker than water.
- Flows through a straw but ***only*** if advised by a Speech and Language Therapist.
- Needs a little more effort to drink than thin liquids.

How do you mix it?

Always read the instructions on the tin/sachet.

Some ask you to add the powder to the fluid and stir briskly. Others ask you to pour the fluid over the powder while stirring.

Don’t overfill the glass or cup, so you have space to mix it thoroughly.

Milky drinks will often need more thickener to get the right consistency.

The drink may need to stand for a few minutes to reach the correct consistency. Do not add additional thickener during standing time as the liquid is continuing to thicken.

Some companies provide ‘shakers’ which allow easy mixing of the thickener into drinks. Or try using a jug with a lid – add the liquid and thickener and shake.

Discard drinks which have been sitting for over 30 minutes.



Other tips:

Some foods are considered to be “thin fluids”, e.g. soup, sauces or medications. These must also be thickened to the recommended consistency, using the thickener. Also remember things like milk on cereal and fruit juice in fruit salad.

Ice-cream and jelly must be avoided if thickened fluids have been recommended because they turn to thin fluid in the mouth.

BE AWARE: Dry thickening powder can be dangerous if ingested or inhaled. Please keep out of the reach of people who may be at risk of inadvertently eating the powder (e.g. those with cognitive or visual problems).

If you have any questions, please contact the Adult Speech & Language Therapy Department on 01225 824333.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.