

Speech & Language Therapy

SWALLOWING PROBLEMS

Dysphagia

What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is the medical term for a swallowing disorder. The types of problem will vary, for example:

- difficulty chewing or moving food within the mouth
- difficulty with the swallowing reflex, or
- food or drink going 'down the wrong way' into the lungs

What is the Speech and Language Therapy role?

The Speech and Language Therapist will assess the person's ability to swallow and will advise on:

- ✓ the best sitting position
- ✓ the most appropriate food texture
- ✓ the need to thicken drinks
- ✓ ways to achieve a safer swallow

What are possible outcomes of the assessment?

Possible recommendations are:

1. nil by mouth (NBM) - as the swallow is unsafe
2. modified food or thickened drinks
3. normal food and drinks

High Risk Foods

Be careful when eating the following foods:

- Fruit or vegetables with tough skins such as apples, grapes, peas or sweet corn.
- Stringy or fibrous textures, like pineapple, celery, and lettuce.
- Mixed textures such as cornflakes with milk or soup with bits in.
- Crunchy food like crisps, toast and nuts.
- Dry crumbly textures such as biscuits, cake and crackers.
- Hard or very chewy food like toffees, seeds, sausages, bacon and chunks of meat.

How can I help someone who has a swallowing problem?

1. If the person has dentures, ensure they are in and fitting well. Use denture glue if needed.
2. Make sure person is sitting as upright as possible, preferably at a table.
3. Encourage them to take their time and to concentrate.
4. Avoid distractions and talking.
5. Do not let them eat or drink if tired or sleepy.
6. Do not let them tip their head backwards.
7. Encourage them to chew food, to help trigger the swallow.
8. Remind them to check their mouth is clear before taking another mouthful.
9. Two swallows may be necessary.
10. If the person begins to cough, stop eating and drinking and encourage a strong cough, to help clear the food or drink.

If you have any questions, please contact the Adult Speech and 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.

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