
Safe Swallowing

What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is a swallowing problem that makes eating or drinking certain foods and/or liquids unsafe or difficult. A dysphagia diet includes foods that are softer than regular food. Sometimes liquids need to be thickened. This makes swallowing easier and safer. It also can help prevent food or liquid from going into your lungs.

Common Causes of Dysphagia

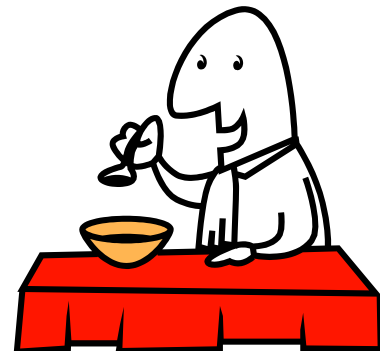
• Stroke	• Chronic lung disease
• Multiple sclerosis, ALS, Parkinson's Disease	• Cancer of the mouth, throat or esophagus
• Surgery to the neck, throat or esophagus	• Radiation to the neck, throat or chest
• Reflux disease	• Dementia, Alzheimer's Disease
• Traumatic Brain Injury	• Aging

Signs and Symptoms of Dysphagia

• Coughing before, during, and after swallowing	• Change in voice quality – wet, gurgles, or weak
• Choking on foods or liquids	• Drooling
• Repeated swallowing for one bite	• Needing liquids to 'wash' food down
• Taking longer to eat, unable to finish a meal	• Pocketing food in the cheeks or found in the mouth after meals
• Feeling like food is sticking in the throat or chest	• Weight loss

Tips for Safe Swallowing:

- Eat while sitting in an upright position
- Avoid distractions – focus on eating!
- Eat and drink slowly; take small bites
- Chew thoroughly and swallow completely
- Sit upright for 30 minutes after eating



Diet Level and Food Consistency

Your health care provider, dietitian or speech-language pathologist will recommend the right diet level and liquid consistency for you.

Dysphagia Pureed

Foods on this diet are pureed to a pudding-like consistency.

Dysphagia Mechanically-Altered

Foods on this diet are soft textured, moist and easy to chew. Meats must be ground or minced into pieces no larger than ¼-inch. Vegetables must be smaller than ½-inch pieces, thoroughly cooked and mashed with a fork. Foods from the Dysphagia Pureed diet can also be eaten on this diet.

Dysphagia Advanced

Foods must be moist and cut into bite-sized pieces. No sticky, chewy, hard, or stringy foods are allowed. Foods from the Dysphagia Pureed and Mechanically-Altered diets can also be eaten on this diet.

Liquid Consistency

Nectar Thick

Nectar thick liquids are thickened to the consistency of peach or pear nectar. Liquids must stay this thickness at room and body temperature. Nectar thick liquids will coat a spoon lightly.



Honey Thick

Honey thick liquids are thicker than nectar thick liquids but not as thick as pudding. Liquids should pour slowly off a spoon and coat the spoon like honey. The liquid should not run off like a thin liquid or plop like pudding. Liquids must remain at this consistency at room or body temperature.

Tip: Thickeners are available to thicken thin liquids to the desired consistency; they come in powder or gel form. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for mixing. Pre-thickened beverages are also available.