



FOR CAREGIVERS

Your role is essential. Dysphagia can be emotionally challenging. Support, patience, and information make a big difference. You are not alone.

We strongly encourage you to seek care from professionals trained in the treatment of dysphagia. They will assess the causes of the dysphagia, help you better understand its risks, and support you so that your loved one can eat safely and enjoyably.

- Nutritionist
- Speech Therapist
- Doctor
- Nurse

A TAILORED PLAN HELPS MAINTAIN THE SAFETY, HEALTH, AND ENJOYMENT OF EATING

We recommend discussing the difficulties your loved one is experiencing with swallowing at mealtimes and the risks associated with dysphagia.

Keep a record of your observations, questions, and concerns.

Keep written records of your loved one's dysphagia progression.

Contact your local community health center (CLSC). Some professionals in the private sector can also provide support.

PRACTICAL GUIDE

for People Living with Dysphagia and Their Caregivers



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SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

Consult a professional if you observe one or more of the following signs:

- Food dribbling from the mouth
- Coughing and/or throat clearing during and after meals
- A feeling of food being stuck in the throat and/or esophagus
- A "wet" voice after eating
- Increased fatigue during and at the end of meals
- Longer meal times
- More difficulty chewing
- Food remaining in the mouth after swallowing
- Choking (food lodged in the airway), requiring the Heimlich maneuver
- Lung infections
- Unintentional weight loss



ESSENTIAL MEALTIME TIPS

1. Promote a Safe Posture

- Sitting upright at a 90-degree angle
- Feet on the floor
- Head positioned at a 90-degree angle or slightly tilted forward if recommended
- Remain seated for at least 30 minutes after meals

2. Create a Calm Environment

- Reduce distractions (e.g., TV, radio, noisy environment)
- Encourage gently without rushing
- Allow sufficient time for eating
- Respect the person's pace

3. Establish a Safe Mealtime Framework

- Cut food into small pieces
- Take small bites and sips
- Take one bite at a time
- Eat slowly
- Chew food thoroughly before swallowing
- Empty any residue in the mouth before taking another bite/sip
- Avoid talking with food or liquids in your mouth
- Wait approximately 20-30 minutes after meals before going to bed

4. Encourage good oral hygiene

- Brush your teeth, tongue, and the inside of your cheeks three times a day, after each meal.
- If you have dentures, ideally clean them three times a day, after each meal.
- Encourage an annual dental checkup.

Good oral hygiene helps prevent excessive bacterial growth in the mouth, a factor that significantly increases the risk of developing aspiration pneumonia.

5. Hydration: a major issue

Hydration is common in people with dysphagia.

If thickened liquids are prescribed:

- Follow the recommended thickening level.
- Measure the thickening agent correctly.
- Monitor for signs of dehydration (dry mouth, dark urine, fatigue).
- Encourage hydration throughout the day by taking small sips.

6. Prevent malnutrition

If your loved one's appetite is decreased or the amount consumed is reduced:

- Enrich (add protein and/or fat to foods).
- Divide meals into smaller, more frequent portions throughout the day.
- Encourage your loved one to consult a nutritionist to optimize their nutritional intake.

7. Respect recommended textures.

- Do not modify textures without professional advice.
- Always check the consistency before serving.

In summary, dear caregivers,

Your role is crucial when eating becomes difficult. Dysphagia is a swallowing disorder that can make it difficult or risky to ingest food, liquids, or medication.

- Respect the person's pace.
- Avoid forcing or rushing.
- Provide gentle encouragement.
- Seek professional help.

