

## What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is a difficulty with swallowing. This can happen when food passes from the mouth to the stomach.



## Causes of Dysphagia

- Stroke
- Dementia
- Progressive disorders (eg Parkinson's Disease, Motor Neurone Disease)
- Acquired brain injury
- Tumour
- Head and neck surgery

## What happens in Dysphagia?

- **Drizzling** of saliva, fluids or food when eating or drinking
- **Difficulty chewing** solid food
- Feeling as if food is getting **'stuck'** in the **mouth or throat**
- Feeling food/fluid going down the **wrong way**
- Difficulty getting the **swallow reflex started**
- **Wet / gurgly sounding voice** after swallowing
- Many swallows needed to clear food or drink
- **Pain** when swallowing
- **Coughing before, during or after** taking food or drinks
- **Choking**

## Role of the Speech-Language Therapist (SLT)

The SLT will assess the swallow and will advise:

- The best sitting position for ease and safety of swallowing



- Types of food / drink that are the easiest and safest to chew and swallow
- Techniques and exercises to assist swallowing and make eating/drinking safer

In some cases, it may **not be safe** to have food or drink through the mouth. If this happens, **other feeding methods may be needed**, e.g. NG (tube down the nose to the stomach) or PEG (tube straight into the stomach).

## Swallowing problems can lead to:

- Dehydration/malnutrition
- Chest infections
- Weight loss
- Embarrassment
- Social Isolation

[continued]

## Safe Swallowing Tips

- Always **sit upright** with support when eating and drinking
- **Don't tip your head** back when eating or drinking
- **Slow down and take your time**
- Concentrate. **No distractions!**
- Take **small mouthfuls and pause** between each mouthful to allow time to swallow
- **Don't talk** while eating or drinking
- **Cough** if you need to **clear your airway**
- Complete **swallowing exercises** given by the Speech Language Therapist
- Keep **mouth healthy and clean** with regular tooth brushing and rinsing with mouthwash

If you have any further questions please contact Speech-Language Therapy.

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_