

## Patient information

# Dysphagia information and advice

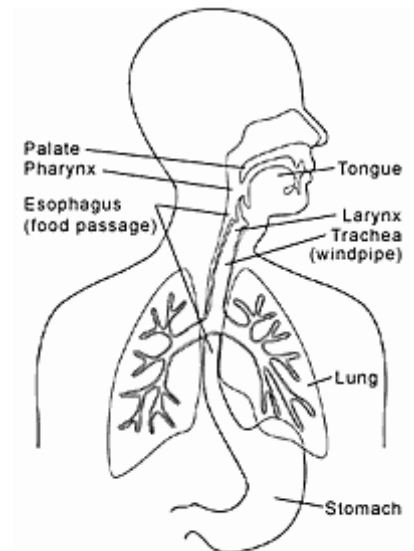
## What is Dysphagia?

The medical term for problems with eating, drinking and swallowing is dysphagia. Some people have difficulty swallowing certain foods or liquids; this can vary in degree from mild discomfort, to an inability to swallow.

## Causes of a swallowing difficulty

Can result from a wide variety of medical conditions, for example:

- Neurological conditions e.g. stroke, Parkinson's disease, dementia
- Brain injury/trauma
- Respiratory conditions



## Signs of a swallowing difficulty

- Difficulty chewing food
- Food or drink collecting in the mouth or leaking from the mouth
- Difficulty triggering the swallow
- Food or drink going down the wrong way i.e. into the lungs. This is called 'aspiration' and can cause coughing, choking and could lead to chest infections
- Wet or 'gurgly' voice after eating or drinking
- Weight loss or dehydration

## Managing swallowing difficulties

- A Speech and Language Therapist will assess the type of swallowing difficulty and determine whether it is safe for a person to eat and drink.
- They will advise on the most suitable consistency of food and drink (e.g. some people may require drinks to be thickened with thickening powder or foods to be soft or pureed).
- Ensure the person is sat fully upright and is alert when eating and drinking
- Encourage slow and relaxed eating, allowing as much time as needed
- It is better if the person can feed themselves
- Small mouthfuls of food and small sips of drink are usually best

## The future

Swallowing difficulties can improve, fluctuate or persist depending on the person's condition and recommendations given by the Speech and Language Therapist will reflect that.

If you notice any of the signs listed above once you are home, please contact your Speech and Language Therapist or your GP.

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*

<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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