



What is Dysphagia/ Swallowing Disorder?

Dysphagia is a medical term used to describe a Feeding/ swallowing disorder. This can occur when someone has a stroke, head injury, trauma, surgery or radiation to the head/neck region.

Symptoms include:

- ◆ Coughing/ choking on food/ liquids and frequent throat clearing after swallowing.
- ◆ Wet/ gurgly voice after swallowing
- ◆ Difficulty chewing food
- ◆ Difficulty drinking liquids from a cup or straw due to oral spillage
- ◆ Pocketing of food in the sides of the mouth
- ◆ Lack of sensation for eating resulting in poor taste and ability to control food/ liquids
- Drooling, or food spilling out of the mouth while eating
- Delayed ability to initiate a swallow despite prolonged chewing

How is Dysphagia identified?

A speech-language pathologist (SLP) is the health professional qualified to assess and treat dysphagia. Referral for a swallowing assessment is usually from the physician, neurologist, oncologist or E.N.T. Specialist.

Before treating the swallowing disorder the SLP conducts a swallowing evaluation using different consistencies of food and liquids. A barium swallow (swallowing x-ray) is one of the radiographic procedures performed in conjunction with the swallowing assessment. Other procedures may include a fiber-optic endoscopy of swallowing (FEES). Once the type and severity of dysphagia is identified then therapy can commence to help improve the feeding/ swallowing.



Making meal times more enjoyable with loved ones.....

Treatment for Dysphagia

The SLP provides treatment to improve the feeding/ swallowing disorder by:

- ◆ Modifying the diet to the appropriate texture/ consistency for safe and easier swallowing
- ◆ Implementing safe swallowing techniques and airway protection exercises
- ◆ Exercises to strengthen the oral and pharyngeal (throat) muscles for swallowing
- ◆ Direct treatment techniques such as massage, muscle strengthening and stimulation to weak muscles to improve swallowing.



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