

Speech and Language Therapy – Dysphagia - How to Swallow Safely

Before eating and drinking

- Sit as upright as possible, preferably in a chair and at a table
- Ensure the table is clean and clear
- Remember to wash/wipe your hands before eating
- Reduce any distractions such as radio or television

During eating and drinking

- Eat and drink slowly; do not rush
- Take one mouthful at a time - sometimes two or more swallows may be needed to help clear the food or drink from your throat or mouth
- Avoid more difficult foods/drinks when you are tired e.g. late in the day
- Ensure your mouth is clear before taking another mouthful
- Alternating sips of drink and mouthfuls of food may be helpful
- Drinks should be taken from an ordinary cup or glass unless advised otherwise
- Spouts or straws should usually be avoided as they make fluids more difficult to control
- Avoid large mouthfuls
- Try to avoid tipping your head backwards when eating and drinking

After eating and drinking

- Stay sitting upright for 30 minutes after eating
- At the end of each meal make sure your mouth is empty

Top tips

- Clean your mouth well to avoid bacteria growing. Brush your teeth, gums and tongue twice a day. Don't forget to clean your dentures thoroughly.
- Iced or fizzy drinks can sometimes be easier to swallow (remember to thicken if necessary).
- If tablets are difficult for you to manage, ask your doctor about liquid medication.