

For Caregivers: Swallowing Problems After Stroke

Some people have trouble swallowing (**dysphagia**) after a stroke. This makes choking more likely. It also puts their health at further risk for conditions like aspiration pneumonia. Aspiration pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that occurs when food or liquid goes into the lungs instead of the stomach. To maintain nutritional needs, a speech therapist may teach your loved one ways to improve swallowing.



For your loved one's safety, prepare all food and drink exactly as directed.

Learning new ways to eat

If swallowing is a problem, changes in diet and body positioning may help. Some people are directed to turn the head to a specific side to aid swallowing. Adding thickeners to liquids may also make swallowing easier. Some people need to avoid hot or cold items. Sometimes eating smaller amounts of food at a slower rate can help. If a person cannot take food or drink by mouth, a feeding tube may be needed. As swallowing improves, restrictions will be adjusted.

Increasing muscle control

Many people are helped by exercises. Some strengthen muscles in the mouth for better swallowing. Others improve tongue movement and lip closure. This keeps food in the mouth until the person is ready to swallow.

Food and drink guide

The speech therapist will teach you which food textures and liquids your loved one can swallow safely. Discuss examples using foods he or she likes.

Foods:	Liquids:
<input type="checkbox"/> None by mouth/tube feeding	<input type="checkbox"/> None by mouth/tube feeding
<input type="checkbox"/> Pureed	<input type="checkbox"/> Honey thick
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Nectar thick
<input type="checkbox"/> Normal	<input type="checkbox"/> Thin
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____