

SAFER FEEDING TECHNIQUES

DYSPHAGIA TRAINING VIDEO HANDOUT

NOVEMBER 2020

ENDORSED BY



This handout summarises the video, '**Safer Feeding Techniques**', produced by the CSH Surrey, North West Surrey Adult Speech and Language Therapy team.

Please print a copy of this handout and keep it as a reminder of the advice given to you in the video.

Watch the video as many times as you need to, and come back to it whenever you feel you need a refresher.

The video aims to help anyone in a caring role:-

- to understand some key information about swallowing disorders, and;
- Practice the safer feeding methods demonstrated in the video

By doing this, you will be creating more enjoyable meal times and helping to reduce weight loss, dehydration, chest infections and pneumonia in the people you support.

This resource provides general advice on safer feeding techniques.

If you are supporting someone with swallowing difficulties that has not been assessed by a Speech Therapist, please make a referral to your local Speech Therapy team.

If the person you are caring for has specific recommendations, made by a Speech Therapist, please follow them.

WHAT IS DYSPHAGIA?

Dysphagia, pronounced, "**dis-FAY-jee-uh**", is the medical term for swallowing difficulties.

It can include problems chewing food, difficulty controlling food or fluid in the mouth, and food and fluid 'going the wrong way' into the airway or lungs.

This can occur as a result of many conditions, for example, following a stroke or because of Parkinson's disease, OR as a part of natural age-related changes.

Dysphagia is not uncommon. It is thought that it may affect over 60% of nursing home residents, and 30% of the older people who are admitted to hospital.

BEFORE SUPPORTING SOMEONE WITH A MEAL OR DRINK

- Start by washing your hands, and follow local food and hand hygiene protocols.
- Ensure the person is alert, comfortably positioned (as upright as possible) and well supported.
- Make the environment quiet and free from distractions where possible. This can be particularly helpful for those with conditions that cause reduced attention, such as dementia.
- Mouth care should be completed a minimum of twice a day. Make sure the teeth, dentures, gums and tongue, are all clean. If the person you are assisting has difficulty chewing and swallowing safely, always complete oral care first. Good mouth care can help prevent serious infections. Further advice and guidelines on oral care are available from NICE.
- Make sure the meal looks appetising and that the person you are helping can see you and their meal clearly.
- If advice has been given by a Speech Therapist, ensure that the food and drink being given matches their recommendations.
- Ideally, the person eating and drinking should have their head level, with their chin straight or slightly tucked down. Try to avoid positions where the chin is raised or the neck is extended, as this can make swallowing more difficult and increase risks.
- If the person needs to stay in bed to eat and drink, support the person to sit as upright as possible – be sure to use safe moving and handling techniques. You may need to raise the back of the bed, and use extra pillows.
- Sit down at the same level as the person you are supporting.
- If someone eats more slowly, a plate warmer may be useful to keep their meal warm.

DURING THE MEAL - SUPPORTING SOMEONE TO EAT AND DRINK

- Support the person to feed themselves wherever possible.
- Use hand over hand support if needed - place one hand at the elbow, and use the other to help hold cutlery and guide the hand to the mouth. This will allow someone to have greater control over the speed of feeding, encourages independence, and can improve chewing and swallowing.
- Be patient, do not rush.
- Avoid large mouthfuls - Make sure each mouthful is swallowed before moving on to the next.
- Encourage chewing and swallowing if needed. You can do this verbally or with gentle touch.
- Changing tastes and temperatures can be helpful for people with cognitive difficulties who may be holding food or drinks in their mouths.
- Offer regular sips of a drink during a meal.
- Use a normal cup wherever possible. Avoid spouted cups and straws - this may give someone less time to prepare for a swallow.
- Look out for signs that the person you are assisting has had enough to eat and drink. Some people prefer small, frequent meals.
- For safety, remove problematic foods or consider changing to softer, more moist foods.

AFTER THE MEAL

- Check the person's mouth is empty – particularly inside the cheeks and the roof of the mouth.
- If someone has swallowing difficulties, mouth care should be completed after the meal.
- To reduce the risk of reflux, keep the person upright for a period of time after a meal. NHS guidance suggests that you should not eat within 3 to 4 hours before going to bed.
- If you noticed any difficulties, a diary can be helpful in identifying problematic foods and finding out how often any problems occur.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE WITH SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES PLEASE REFER THEM TO SPEECH THERAPY FOR AN ASSESSMENT AND INFORM THEIR GP.

Signs of swallowing difficulties can include:

- Frequent coughing, throat clearing, or *choking on food or drinks
- A wet sounding voice after swallowing
- Changes to breathing patterns
- Facial redness
- Difficulty chewing
- Drooling
- Weight loss
- Chest infections or aspiration pneumonia

***Choking is a life-threatening medical emergency caused by an obstruction that prevents normal breathing.**

If someone experiences choking you will need to take immediate action in line WITH BASIC LIFE SUPPORT TRAINING OR NHS GUIDANCE.

If your GP is located in North West Surrey please direct referrals to:

CSH Single Point of Access (SPA)

Telephone: 0330 726 0333

Email: CSH.SPAreferrals@nhs.net

(Monday-Friday: 8am - 6pm)

NB: Referrals that lack information will be returned

For enquiries about people already known to the Speech Therapy service or to discuss concerns please contact:

North West Surrey Speech and Language Therapy Adult Service
Woking Community Hospital, Heathside Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7HS

Telephone: 01483 846 437

Email: CSH.NWSSALT@NHS.NET

Please note: Email is only secure if sending from an nhs.net account or other secure route.