

Dietary Tips for Managing **CHEWING & SWALLOWING** Difficulties After Stroke



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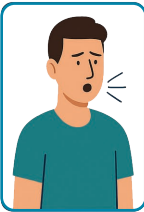
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HOW CAN A STROKE AFFECT SWALLOWING?

Normally, swallowing happens without much thought or effort. It is a very complex process where the brain co-ordinates with different muscles to ease swallowing.

If a stroke damages a part of the brain that helps control swallowing, it can affect your ability to chew and swallow safely (known as dysphagia).

WHAT SWALLOWING PROBLEMS ARE EXPECTED AFTER A STROKE?

COUGH	CHOKING	POCKETING OF FOOD IN CHEEK	PAINFUL SWALLOWING	DROOLING
				
Cough during or after meal	Choking on food	Presence of food residues on tongue or in mouth	Sensation of food sticking to throat	Drooling or food spilling from the mouth

WHY DOES SWALLOWING MATTER?



Swallowing ability matters because it can lead to lung infections, poor nutrition, dehydration and weight loss. It can make mealtimes and social occasions less pleasant.

ARE THERE ANY DIETARY STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP WITH SWALLOWING?

The speech & language therapist and / or dietitian may advise you to change the consistency of your food and drink to make swallowing safer.

Modifying diet consistency/texture of the foods

- ✓ **Altering the diet to a more appropriate consistency or texture suitable to the chewing and swallowing ability after stroke** will help reduce energy expenditure during feeding and will ease chewing, and swallowing. This will cause less fatigue during mealtimes.
- ✓ **Moistening foods with sauces or gravies** can serve as a lubricant and ease the passage of the food through your throat during swallowing and may reduce the likelihood that the materials will get stuck in the pockets in your throat.

DIET CONSISTENCIES

Our usual solid foods (such as rice, meat and vegetables) can be difficult for people with loss of teeth, loose dentures, or weak tongue and lip muscles. Modifying the food to make it softer can help!



DIET OF CHOICE
All varieties of food

SOFT DIET OF CHOICE
Excludes hard /
crispy textures



COARSELY MINCED
Soft cooked food 1-2 cubes



FINELY MINCED
Soft cooked food 0.5 cm,
Minimal chewing



BLENDED
Pureed and mashed,
No chewing required

Adding Thickeners

The purpose of thickening agents or thickeners is to make regular liquids thicker (more viscous) and slow the flow rate of the liquid material during swallowing to coordinate and protect the airway.

There are different levels of thickening for liquids.

FLUID CONSISTENCIES

Normal (thin) fluids flow quickly and require good muscle control and coordination for safe swallows. Thickened fluids flow slower therefore allowing people more time to swallow safely.



Thin Fluids (Non Thickened)

They run quickly through the prongs of the fork with little or no coating



Nectar Thick

They coat the fork and quickly sink through the prongs. Effort is required to drink this level with a standard straw



Honey Thick

They coat the fork and slowly sink through the prongs. Using a spoon may be the best way to take this fluid level.



Pudding Thick

They remain on the fork and hold together well. A spoon is necessary to consume this level.

Mealtime Compensations

- ✓ Taking smaller bites and sips of food and liquid respectively may make it easier to control the food during the swallow.



- ✓ Commercially available oral nutrition supplements can be added to provide extra nourishment and to compensate for any meals skipped.

Mealtime Strategies

Possible Changes at Mealtime	Recommended Compensation or Strategy*
 LONGER MEALTIME DURATION	✓ Take smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day. ✓ Add snacks
 DIFFICULTY CHEWING	✓ Moisten foods with gravies and/or sauces. ✓ Use smaller bite sizes. ✓ Change food consistency to a softer diet that requires less chewing.
 WEIGHT LOSS	✓ Add foods high in calories (e.g., peanut butter added to shakes, butter, condiments) ✓ Drink full cream milk smoothies or shakes ✓ Supplement nutrition with drinks such as Boost®, Ensure®, or Resource Benecalorie® ✓ Add snacks throughout the day
 LOSS OF ENJOYMENT	✓ Increase taste, temperature, and textures using spices/sauces.
 FATIGUE / SHORTNESS OF BREATH	✓ Take smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day. ✓ Minimize exertion during meals (i.e., side conversations, distractions)

WHAT MEALTIME PRECAUTIONS SHOULD FAMILY AND CARETAKERS FOLLOW WHILE OFFERING FEEDING ASSISTANCE?

- ✔ Feed while the patient is fully awake.
- ✔ Offer comfortable seating position while feeding.
- ✔ Make sure they have access to their dentures, hearing aids and glasses at all meals.
- ✔ Make sure their mouth is clean and clear before meals.
- ✔ Encourage them to take small bites and sips.
- ✔ Make sure they swallow the first bite or sip before you give the next one.
- ✔ Make sure their mouth is clean and clear of food after every meal.
- ✔ Make sure they remain sitting straight for 20 to 30 minutes after eating.
- ✔ Try to have a slow and relaxed dining experience.



WHAT IF I AM UNABLE TO SWALLOW SAFELY?

Although swallowing problems often get better within the first few weeks, it can take longer for some to improve. If you are unable to swallow safely, your stroke care team may talk to you about being fed by a tube to support your nutritional needs.

References

- 01 Swallowing_Problems_After_Stroke_English.pdf
- 02 Framework Documents - Resources - IDDSI
- 03 f05cg_cg_to_swallowing_problems_v2_may_2020.pdf
- 04 Recommendations for the Management of Nutrition and Hydration in Patients with Stroke

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