



## Caregiver Bulletin



# Dysphagia and Food Texture

## What are some signs to look for in a person who may be choking?

- Has a hard time swallowing.
- Feels like food is stuck in their throat.
- Holds food in their mouth for long periods of time, without swallowing.
- Coughs or clears their throat while eating or drinking.
- Drools when eating or drinking.
- Gurgles or has a wet voice after eating.
- Has frequent heartburn.

## Learn More

[DSHS DDCCS care provider bulletin, Choking](#)

[DSHS DDCCS video, Choking Prevention, Signs and Causes](#)

[National Institutes of Health, Dysphagia](#)

[Mayo Clinic, Dysphagia](#)

[Osmosis, Soft food diet](#)

## What you need to know about dysphagia and food texture

Dysphagia is a swallowing disorder. Some people have a hard time swallowing foods, liquids or their own saliva. This can be due to a neurological or physical limitation.

Difficulty swallowing can also be an aversion to food textures or consistency. Food texture aversion is more than a preference or picky eating.

## What are the dangers?

Dysphagia can be serious. If someone cannot swallow properly, they are at risk of aspiration and choking.

Aspiration is when food or liquid goes into the lungs. Aspiration can cause infections, breathing problems, and lead to death. Someone may have problems keeping a healthy weight if they cannot eat enough of the right food.

## Who is at risk?

If someone you care for has a nervous system or brain disorder, be aware of their swallowing. Sometimes trouble swallowing happens after an injury, infection or surgery.

Problems swallowing may happen with:

- Cerebral palsy
- Dementia
- Multiple sclerosis
- Brain tumors
- Stroke
- Parkinsons
- Muscular dystrophy
- Traumatic brain injury



**If someone is choking, give first aid and call 911.**



# Dysphagia and Food Texture

## How can I help when someone has dysphagia?

- Have meals in a quiet place and limit distractions at mealtimes.
- Encourage small bites of food and slow eating or drinking.
- Have them sit upright during meals and for at least 30 minutes after.
- Remind them not to talk while chewing or swallowing.
- Follow a written plan for their specific nutritional needs.
- During meals and snacks, keep an eye on anyone who might have a risk of choking.

## Foods for dysphagia

- Foods that are soft, tender and moist tend to be easier to swallow.
- Chop, dice, peel or puree foods to ease swallowing.
- Avoid hard, chunky, or sticky foods.

Always follow the prescribed diet plan. People with advanced dysphagia may have prescribed diet textures, outside of “easy to swallow foods.”



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