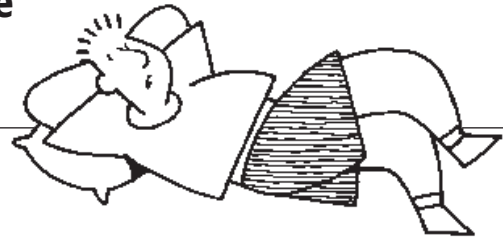


## ASPIRATION leads to life threatening Pneumonia

**Aspiration** means taking foreign material into the lungs.

- ✓ Aspiration of gastric acid causes **Chemical Pneumonia**;
- ✓ Aspiration of a foreign bacteria causes **Bacterial Pneumonia**; and
- ✓ Aspiration of a foreign body causes an **Acute Respiratory Emergency** (obstruction).

**Aspiration Pneumonia** includes both chemical and bacterial pneumonia and may be fatal if not treated immediately.



### What do I look for?

#### **General Signs of Aspiration Pneumonia:**

- ✓ Fever,
- ✓ Cough,
- ✓ Fatigue,
- ✓ Chest Pain,
- ✓ Shortness of breath,
- ✓ Cyanosis ("bluing of skin),
- ✓ Rapid heart rate, and
- ✓ Wheezing, bronchial breath sounds

**Chemical Pneumonia** can happen within a few minutes to hours after aspiration – has cough with frothy or pink sputum, respiratory distress, rapid breathing. *Maintain airway; clear secretions (including suctioning if needed) until you get medical help.*

**Bacterial Aspiration Pneumonia** may happen days after aspiration – cough has pus/sputum, and you may see weight loss, periodontal disease, bad breath, clubbing of fingers. *Antibiotics ARE REQUIRED as the mainstay of treatment – seek help immediately!*

### What do I do if I suspect Aspiration Pneumonia?

**Get medical help immediately** if you suspect Aspiration Pneumonia. Some people only have hours before it develops into a life threatening condition!

## **PREVENTION is the way to be safest!,**

- ✓ If there is any question at all about a person's ability to swallow properly, **get a swallowing evaluation done immediately.**
- ✓ If the person is put on a soft food or pureed food diet, **it is a life or death matter to that person!**
- ✓ If the person's care plan says to cut food up into small bites, **never neglect to do so as it can be fatal!**
- ✓ **Find out what positions are best for the person** when he or she is eating and swallowing. Generally keep the chin tucked and the head turned, and ask the person to do repeated swallowing.



### **PREVENTION TIPS for persons suffering from swallowing disorders:**

- ✓ Positioning to prevent aspiration of gastric acid.
  - ✓ 30-45 degree angle, if sitting up; on side, with mouth to side, angle upper leg forward to prevent rolling over.
  - ✓ Antacids to reduce gastric acidity.
  - ✓ Anti-emetics to reduce esophageal pressure.
- ### **Look for CLUES TO TROUBLE:**
- ✓ The biggest danger is not recognizing the risk!
  - ✓ Adults are more likely than children to develop Aspiration Pneumonia.
  - ✓ Feeding patients at high risk for aspiration incorrectly is dangerous; and
  - ✓ Resuming feeding after intubation, without getting a professional assessment of the patient's ability to swallow.