

What causes dysphagia?

- Dysphagia can affect one or more stages of swallowing.
- Many muscles and nerves are involved in swallowing. Any damage or change in their function can cause problems swallowing.

Some examples of conditions that can cause dysphagia are dementia, delirium, stroke, unmanaged reflux, cancer of the head and neck, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS)

- Swallowing and breathing go together. During swallowing, the breathing airway must be protected. Respiratory illness such as COPD, can affect swallowing because of decreased ability to coordinate breathing and swallowing.

Will my swallowing improve?

- This depends on the cause of your dysphagia.
- Your doctor and speech-language pathologist will talk to you about treatment options and if your swallowing will improve or not.

Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study (VSS)

What is a VSS?

- A VSS is an x-ray video. It does not hurt to do. Food and liquid is mixed with a special substance called barium. When you swallow this mixture, a machine takes a video of the food and liquid going down.

Why do a VSS?

- This test allows the SLP to see exactly where the food and liquid is going when you swallow.
- This can help you and the SLP to work together to find the best ways to manage your swallowing problem.

Your SLP: _____

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Dysphagia

(pronounced dis-FAY-jah)

The Speech-Language
Pathologist and You



*Dysphagia is the medical term
for problems swallowing*

St. Joseph's
Healthcare  **Hamilton**

www.stjoes.ca

What is a Speech-Language Pathologist?

A Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) helps people that have trouble swallowing, also known as dysphagia.

Assessment: The SLP reviews your medical history, looks at the function of the muscles used for swallowing, and looks for signs of dysphagia while you eat and drink different textures of foods and liquids.

Management: The SLP may suggest strategies and/or changing textures of foods or liquids to help reduce the risks associated with dysphagia. The SLP may also give you some exercises to help improve your swallow.

What are the signs and symptoms of dysphagia?

- Coughing and/or throat clearing while eating and/or drinking
- Feeling of food stuck in the throat
- Unplanned weight loss
- Wet and/or gurgly voice after swallowing
- Problems breathing while eating and/or drinking
- Choking on food and/or saliva

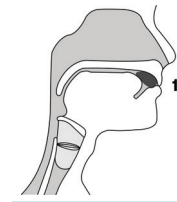
What are some risks when you have dysphagia?

- One risk is called aspiration. This happens when food, liquid and saliva go into the breathing tube instead of the food tube. If this happens, bacteria from the mouth go into the lungs causing aspiration pneumonia or other respiratory problems.
- Problems swallowing can lead to a decrease in the amount of food and fluid you take in. This causes weight loss, malnutrition and dehydration.

What should I know about oral hygiene?

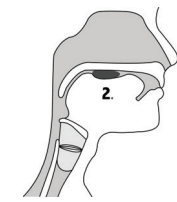
- It is very important to brush your teeth and tongue at least 2 times a day with a toothbrush and toothpaste. This helps reduce the amount of bacteria in your mouth and the risk of getting a lung infection.

The 4 stages of a Normal Swallow



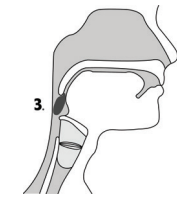
1. Oral Preparatory Phase

Food is chewed and formed into a ball to get ready to swallow.



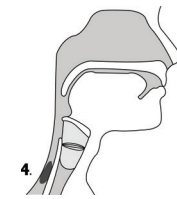
2. Oral Phase

Food moves along the top of the tongue and into the throat.



3. Pharyngeal Phase

The airway closes as food moves through the pharynx (throat) into the esophagus (food tube).



4. Esophageal Phase

Food moves through the esophagus into the stomach.