



East of England
Community Health and Care
NHS Trust

Safe swallowing

Information and advice about
swallowing safely

You have been given this leaflet because you or someone you know has dysphagia (a swallowing difficulty). This leaflet will explain the safest ways to eat and drink.

Before eating and drinking

- Sit as upright as possible, preferably in a chair and at a table.
- Reduce any distractions such as radio or television.

During eating and drinking

- Eat and drink slowly. Do not rush when taking bites.
- Take one mouthful at a time. Sometimes two or more swallows may be needed to help clear the food or drink from your throat or mouth.
- Avoid more difficult foods/drinks when you are tired e.g. late in the day.
- Ensure your mouth is clear before taking another mouthful.
- Alternating sips of drink and mouthfuls of food may be helpful.
- Drinks should be taken from an ordinary cup or glass unless advised otherwise.
- Spouts or straws should usually be avoided as they make fluids more difficult to control.
- Avoid large mouthfuls.
- Try to avoid tipping your head backwards when eating and drinking.
- Try to concentrate and avoid talking while eating or drinking.
- For people that require assistance with feeding, it can be helpful to hold the cup/ spoon/ fork together known as 'hand over hand feeding'.
- Follow the food/ fluid consistencies advised by your Speech & Language Therapist.

After eating and drinking

- Stay sitting upright for 30 minutes after eating.
- At the end of each meal make sure your mouth is empty

Top tips

- Clean your mouth well to avoid bacteria growing. Brush your teeth, gums and tongue twice a day. If you have dentures, don't forget to clean them thoroughly.
- Iced or fizzy drinks can sometimes be easier to swallow (remember to thicken if necessary).
- If tablets are difficult for you to swallow, talk to your pharmacist or ask your GP about possible prescription in an alternative form.

Where can I go for more information?

Your local speech and language therapist will be able to provide you with more information.

For more information about IDDSI please visit the following website:

<https://iddsi.org/>

Speech and Language Therapy Department

Norwich Community Hospital, Bowthorpe Road,
Norwich, NR2 3TU

Tel: 01603 216021

Community Dietetic Department

Thorpe Health Centre, St Williams Way,
Norwich, NR7 0AJ

Tel: 01603 216021

Tell us what you think and help us improve our service.



Accessible formats

If you would like this publication in **large print**, **Braille**, an **alternative format**, or in a **different language**, please contact us on **0800 088 4449** and we will do our best to help.



Feedback

If you have any queries about our services, or would like to provide feedback, please contact our **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**:

- **Telephone:** 0800 088 4449
- **Email:** eec.pals@nhs.net.
- **Opening hours:** Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm

Friends and Family Test

You can also tell us how likely you are to recommend our service to friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment. Your feedback helps our staff understand what they are doing well and where improvements can be made.

Ask a member of staff for a **Friends and Family Test form**, or visit: eastofenglandcommunityhealthandcare.nhs.uk/patient-experience/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals/

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