

Safe Swallowing Strategies and Recommendations

Dysphagia is a *swallowing disorder* that effects any of the four stages of swallowing: oral preparatory, oral, pharyngeal or esophageal. **Dysphagia** is a symptom or consequence of an underlying disease, and is associated with many different disease processes.

Common Symptoms of Dysphagia

Stage of Swallowing	Swallowing Difficulty
Oral Preparatory/ Oral Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty managing saliva • Difficulty chewing/Fatigue with chewing • Food/Liquid spilling out through the lips • Drooling • Difficulty controlling food/liquid in the mouth • Difficulty pushing the food/liquid to the back of the mouth • Residue in the mouth and cheeks
Pharyngeal Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food “sticking” in the throat • Food/liquid coming out of the nose • Coughing, throat clearing, choking during meal time • Shortness of breath and fatigue during meal time • Reduced cough strength and effectiveness
Esophageal Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regurgitation of food/liquid into the throat and mouth • Food “sticking” at the level of the chest

- Swallowing is a complex process that involves 26 muscles and 5 cranial nerves working together to move food from your mouth to the stomach.
- The *modified barium swallow* study (MBS) creates a video of you swallowing using x-rays. The goal of the MBS is to examine your swallowing abilities and identify swallowing strategies that may be helpful.
- An important goal while we are eating and drinking is to make sure we are keeping our swallowing as *safe* and *efficient* as possible.
- Using different strategies, postures or dietary changes may help avoid food and liquids entering your airway or “going down the wrong pipe” at mealtimes.