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Dysphasia Diet/Difficulty in Swallowing

Dysphasia means difficulty with chewing or swallowing food or liquid. To understand how this might happen, it is important to know something about how swallowing occurs. First, food must be chewed thoroughly. Then it is moved to the back of the mouth by tightening the cheek muscles and pressing the tongue against the roof of the mouth. From this point on the process becomes automatic, it is a reflex that people do not actively control. In “rapid fire” succession, the soft palate closes the nasal airway to prevent food from backing into it, the airway into the lungs is closed, and the esophagus (food pipe) relaxes allowing food and liquid to enter it. The muscular esophagus then contracts in a wave like action, sweeping the food along into the stomach. A blockage or a malfunction anywhere in this part of the body or in the nervous system controlling swallowing can result in dysphasia.

Liquids

Fluids are essential to maintain body functions. Usually 6 to 8 cups of liquid are needed daily. For some dysphasia patients, this may present a problem because thin liquid is difficult to swallow. In this case, fluid can be thickened to make it easier to swallow.

Calories

The greater problem for some patients is eating enough calories. Calorie and protein intake can be increased by fortifying the foods the patient does not eat.

- Fortify milk by adding 1 cup of dry powdered milk to one quart of liquid milk. Use this protein fortified milk when making hot cooked creamed soups, sauces, milkshakes and puddings. Also add margarine, sugar, honey, jelly or pureed baby food to increase calories.
- Add strained baby fruit to juices, milkshakes and cooked cereals.
- Add 1 jar of strained baby meat to soup, such as strained chicken noodle soup. Also add strained baby meats to sauces and gravies and mix with strained vegetables.
- Add juice to prepared fruit, cereal or milkshakes.

General Guidelines

- Following each meal, sit in an upright position (90 degree angle) for 30 to 45 minutes.
- Maintain an upright position (as near 90 degrees as possible) whenever eating or drinking.
- Eat in a relaxed atmosphere, with no distractions.
- Take small bites, only 1/2 to 1 teaspoon at a time.
- Do not mix solid foods and liquids in the same mouthful and do not “wash foods down” with liquids, unless you have been instructed to do so by your physician.
- Eat slowly. It may also help to eat only one food at a time.
- Try turning the head down, tucking the chin to the chest, and bending the body forward when swallowing. This often provides greater swallowing ease and helps prevent food from entering the airway.
- Avoid talking while eating.
- When one side of the mouth is weak, place food into stronger side of the mouth, check the inside of the cheek for food that may have been left behind.

Textures/Consistencies of Foods

- Medium (nectar consistency): eggnog, fruit nectars (apricot, peach, pear), honey, thick creamed soups, soft set pudding with added milk, tomato juice, buttermilk, ice cream (no nuts or fruit chunks), milkshakes
- Thick (yogurt or pudding consistency): cooked hot cereal, pudding, custard, gravy, yogurt (no nuts or fruit chunks), cottage cheese mixed in blender with milk or fruit, thick malt and milkshakes

How to Thin Liquids and Foods

- Add cold milk-based liquids to cream, yogurt, cold soups, pureed fruits or puddings and custards.
- Add hot milk-based liquids (hot milk or cream) to pureed soups, pureed vegetables or cooked cereal.
- Add other hot liquids (broth, gravy, sauces) to mashed potatoes, pureed or ground meats and pureed or chopped vegetables. Butter or melted margarine may also be used.

How to Thicken Liquids and Foods

- Add mashed white or sweet potatoes, potato flakes, sauces or commercial thickener to pureed vegetables.
- Add baby rice or commercial thickener to hot milk-based liquids.
- Add flaked baby cereal, flavored gelatin, cooked cream of rice or wheat cereal or a commercial thickener to pureed fruits.

- Add potato flakes, mashed potatoes or flaked baby cereal to other hot liquids (soups, sauces, gravies).
- Add plain unflavored gelatin, pureed fruits, banana flakes, or a commercial thickener to cold liquids.

If a Food Is Too Thin, Add One of the Following:

Baby cereal, banana flakes, bread crumbs, cornstarch, cooked cereals (cream of wheat or rice), custard mix, graham cracker crumbs, gravy, instant potato flakes, mashed potatoes, plain unflavored gelatin powder, plain sauces (white, cheese, tomato), pureed fruits (baby food), pureed meats (baby food), pureed vegetables (baby food), saltine cracker crumbs

If a Food Is Too Thick, Add One of the Following:

Broth, bouillon, gravy, juice, liquid flavored gelatin, melted hot butter/margarine, milk (hot or cold), plain yogurt, strained pureed soups

Level 1: Pureed (pudding like consistency)

Food Groups	Recommended	Avoid
Meat/Meat Substitute	Pureed Meat, Braunschweiger, Eggs that are pureed, Soufflés that are smooth, Softened tofu, Pureed dried Beans and peas	Whole or ground meats, fish or chicken, Dried beans and peas, cheese, cottage cheese, and all eggs that are not pureed, Peanut butter unless pureed into foods
Soups	Blended soups, Broth if on thin liquids	Soups with lumps and chunks
Breads	Pureed all bread items	All items that are not pureed
Cereals (milk to moisten)	Cooked cereals only, Must be smooth with no chunks	Grits and oatmeal unless it is pureed
Fats	Margarine, gravy, sour cream, mayonnaise, cream cheese, whipped topping	All fats with chunky additives
Potatoes & Starches	Very soft mashed potatoes or pureed potatoes with gravy, margarine or sour cream, Well cooked noodles, bread dressing, or rice that has been pureed	Stiff mashed potatoes, Rice, noodles, bread dressing that is not pureed
Vegetables	Pureed vegetables with no chunks or seeds, Tomato past or sauce (no seeds)	All vegetables that are not pureed
Fruits	Pureed fruits or well mashed bananas	Whole fruits (fresh, frozen, canned, dried)
Desserts	Smooth pudding, custards, plain yogurt, pureed desserts and soufflés, Milkshakes, ice cream, sherbet, jell-o, frozen juice bars	Cookies, cakes, pies, pastry, Course or textured puddings, Bread and rice pudding
Beverages	Apple juice, grape juice, prune juice, tomato juice, milk, eggnog, coffee, tea, soda, carbonated drinks, nutritional drinks, Ice chips	Orange juice, Any beverage with lumps, seeds, pulp
Miscellaneous	Sugar, artificial sweetener, salt, finely ground pepper and spices, Ketchup, mustard, bbq sauce, and other smooth sauces, honey and smooth jellies, Very soft smooth candy such as truffles or smooth chocolate candy	Coarsely ground pepper and herbs, Chunky fruit preserves, Seeds, nuts, sticky foods, Chewy candy such as caramels or licorice

Level 2: Mechanically Altered

Food Groups	Recommended	Avoid
Meat/Meat Substitute (1/4 in. pieces)	Moistened ground or very tender cooked meat cut into pieces no larger than 1/4 inch, All meats should be served with gravy, sauces or moistened with broth, Casseroles without rice, Moist macaroni & cheese, Well cooked spaghetti with meat sauce, Soft moist lasagna, Moist meatballs, meat loaf or fish loaf, moist sausage patties served with sauce or gravy, Tuna, chicken or egg salad without large chunks, celery or onion, Cottage cheese, smooth quiche, soft omelets, soufflés, Poached, scrambled or soft cooked eggs (egg yolk soft enough to be mashed with butter), Tofu, Well cooked, slightly mashed dried beans and peas	Dry meats, tough meats, Bacon, link sausage, hotdogs, Dry casseroles or casseroles with rice or large chunks, Cheese slices or cubes, Peanut butter, Hard cooked or crisp fried eggs, Sandwiches, Pizza
Soups	Thickened soups with easy to chew meat or vegetables with pieces no larger than 1/2 inch	No thin broth soups with large chunks, Soups with rice, corn, peas
Breads	Soft pancakes, bite-sized, well moistened with syrup, All other pureed breads	All items that are not pureed, Sliced white or wheat bread, dinner rolls, crackers
Cereals (milk to moisten)	Cooked cereals including oatmeal, Dry cereals such as cornflakes, rice krispies, wheaties, etc., moistened with 1/4 cup of milk, Unprocessed wheat bran stirred into cereal for bulk	Cooked cereals that contain flax seed or other seeds or nuts, Dry cereals that are high fiber and coarse such as raisin bran, Cereals with nuts, seeds, dried fruit and/or coconut
Fats	Margarine, gravy, cream sauces, sour cream, mayonnaise, cream cheese, whipped topping	All fats with coarse or chunky additives
Potatoes & Starches	All potatoes need to be served with butter, sour cream or	Potato skins, Potato chips, Fried or French-fried

	gravy, Mashed potatoes, boiled or baked potatoes soft enough to mash with a fork, Well-cooked hash browns that are not crisp, Well cooked hash browns that are not crisp, Well cooked noodles in sauce, Soft dumplings with butter or gravy cut into 1/2 inch pieces	potatoes, Rice
Vegetables (1/2 in. pieces)	All soft, well cooked vegetables that are soft enough to mash with a fork, Green beans, carrots, All vegetables cut into 1/2 inch pieces	Corn, peas, summer squash, broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, asparagus or other nontender vegetables, Lettuce and other fresh vegetables
Fruits	Canned peaches, pears, applesauce or other canned fruits without seeds or skin, Soft ripe banana, Watermelon without seeds	Fresh or frozen fruits, Cooked fruit with skin or seeds such as baked apples, canned apple slices, fruit cocktail, Bing cherries, Dried fruits, Fresh or canned pineapple
Desserts	Pudding, custard, Soft fruit pies with bottom crust only, Cobblers without seeds or nuts and with soft crumb mixture, Soft moist cakes with icing, Soft moist cookies that have been dunked in milk, Milk shakes, ice cream, sherbet, jell-o	Dry, coarse cakes and cookies, Anything with nuts seeds, coconut, pineapple or dried fruit, Rice or bread pudding
Beverages	Orange juice, apple juice, grape juice, prune juice, tomato juice, milk, eggnog, coffee, tea, soda, carbonated drinks, nutritional drinks, Ice chips	Any beverage with seeds
Miscellaneous	Sugar, artificial sweetener, salt, black pepper and spices, Catsup, mustard, bbq sauces, salsa with tender chunks no larger than 1/2 inch, Honey, jelly, preserves with no seeds, Plain chocolate candy bars	Seeds, nuts, coconut, Sticky foods, Chewy candies such as caramel or licorice

Level 3: Dysphasia Advanced (Nearly Regular Texture)

Food Groups	Recommended	Avoid
Meat/Meat Substitute	Thin, sliced, tender meats, Bite sized meats if necessary, Well moistened fish, All eggs, Yogurt without nuts or coconut, Casseroles with 1/2 inch size chunks of meat, Meat salad sandwich with no crust, Cheese slices, Moist dried beans and peas, Smooth peanut butter	Chunky peanut butter, Yogurt with nuts or coconut
Soups	All soups with vegetables and meats less than 1 inch pieces, Strained corn or clam chowder	Soups with tough meats, Corn or clam chowder
Breads	Well moistened breads, biscuits, muffins, pancakes, waffles, etc., Moistened with syrup, jelly, margarine, honey, etc.	Dry bread, toast, crackers, etc., Tough crusty bread such as French bread, bagels, etc.
Cereals (milk to moisten)	All well moistened cereals, Cooked cereal	Coarse or dry cereals such as shredded wheat or all bran
Fats	All fats	Difficult to chew fat additives such as cream cheese spread with nuts and pineapple
Potatoes & Starches	All including tender fried potatoes, Rice and wild rice, Moist bread dressing	Crispy fried potatoes, Potato skins, Dry bread dressing
Vegetables	All cooked, tender vegetables, Shredded lettuce	All raw vegetables except shredded lettuce, Corn
Fruits	All canned and cooked fruits, Soft peeled fresh fruit such as peaches, nectarines, kiwi, mangos, bananas, cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon without seeds, Soft berries with small seeds such as strawberries	Fresh fruit such as apples or pears, grapes, Papaya, pineapple, or mango, Uncooked dried fruits such as prunes, apricots, raisins, dates, or cranberries, Fruit roll-ups, fruit snacks
Desserts	All desserts, Cakes and cookies that are moist and soft	Dry cakes and cookies, Anything with nuts, seeds, dry fruits, coconut, pineapple
Beverages	Any beverages	
Miscellaneous	All sweeteners and seasonings, All sauces, Nonchewy candies without nuts seeds or coconut, Jam, jelly, honey	Nuts, seeds, coconut, Chewy caramel or taffy type candies, Candies with nuts, seeds or coconut