

Eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (dysphagia)

Children's Speech and Language Therapy
Acute and Community AHPs

Introduction

This leaflet is produced for parents or carers who may have concerns about their child's eating, drinking and swallowing. We hope you find this information useful and if you require further information please telephone us on 01902 444363.

Paediatric dysphagia

Paediatric dysphagia describes eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties in babies, children, and young people. This could include a difficulty with swallowing food and/or fluids. Babies, children and young people may find it difficult to coordinate lip, tongue and jaw movements to chew and move food around the mouth. Dysphagia can also be a difficulty accepting new textures or foods due to sensory difficulties. These difficulties can be present from birth or can develop as the child gets older.

Babies, children and young people with dysphagia may be at increased risk of aspiration. This is when food or fluids go down 'the wrong way' into the airway (trachea) rather than the food pipe (oesophagus).

Signs and symptoms of dysphagia:

- Frequent coughing associated with eating and/or drinking
- Changes in colour e.g. going red or pale, blue tinges on the upper lip
- Changes in breathing – faster or slower than usual
- Wheezing, gurgling or 'wet' breathing/voice
- Eye blinking or eyes watering
- Recurrent chest infections and/or pneumonia
- Difficulty chewing or controlling food and fluids in the mouth
- Food or fluids coming out of the nose when swallowing
- Failure to thrive/unexplained weight loss

It is important that advice is specific to your child and their eating, drinking and swallowing need. This will be discussed with you following your child's initial swallow assessment.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

Strategies to help support eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties:

If you are concerned about your child's eating, drinking and swallowing, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department immediately.

Your child's Speech and Language Therapist will:

- Complete a comprehensive swallow assessment
- Provide an accurate diagnosis of dysphagia
- Support improved and safe swallowing with exercises, swallowing techniques, positioning and modifying textures of food/fluids

Further information to support your child can be found on the following websites:

- NHS advice on solids and weaning - <https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/>
- Your baby's first solid foods - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/babys-first-solid-foods/>
- BLISS baby feeding advice Feeding | Bliss - <https://www.bliss.org.uk/parents/about-your-baby/feeding/weaning-your-premature-baby/about-our-weaning-guide>

Further information to support your child can also be found in these leaflets:

Available at <https://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk/services/service-directory-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy-children/>

- Attention and Listening
- Receptive Language
- Expressive Language
- Speech Sounds
- Social Communication

How do I get in touch?

Speech and Language Therapy Service
The Gem Centre
Neachells Lane
Wednesfield
Wolverhampton
WV11 3PG

Telephone: 01902 444363

E-mail: rwh-tr.Speech-And-Language@nhs.net

Website: <https://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk/services/service-directory-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy/>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。