



**Integrated
Care System**
Nottingham & Nottinghamshire



Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Dysphagia

Speech and Language Therapy Department

Information for patients



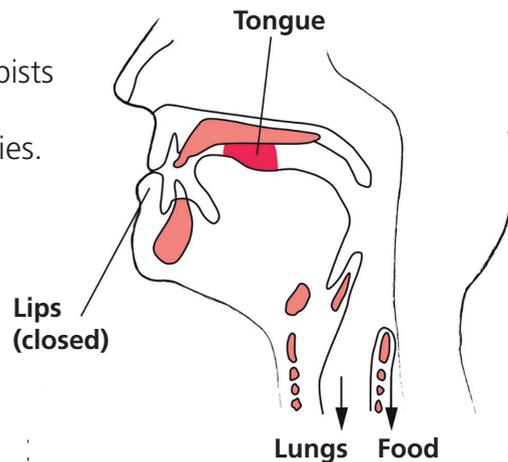
**Healthier Communities,
Outstanding Care**

What is dysphagia?

- Dysphagia means a difficulty swallowing.
- Many people have dysphagia, which can be caused by neurological damage following stroke, head injury, brain tumour, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or dementia.
- It may be caused by structural damage following oral cancer, throat cancer or tracheostomy.
- Dysphagia is a complex condition. It can vary in severity.
- Instrumental and radiological techniques (VF/PG+FEES) may be used to assess swallowing function.
- For people with severe swallowing difficulties, there are alternatives to eating and drinking orally e.g. nasogastric tube. This can be discussed with your doctor and dietician.

The Dysphagia Team

- Nursing staff, doctors and speech and language therapists are often the first people to identify swallowing difficulties.
- The specialist speech and language therapist will provide a full assessment.



Problems to look out for when eating and drinking:

- Sensation of food going down the wrong way, or something 'sticking', pain or discomfort.
- Coughing during or after food or drinks.
- Voice may sound wet/gurgly after drinking.
- Difficulties with chewing and keeping food or drink in your mouth.
- Feeling short of breath, during or after food or drinks.
- Feeling 'chesty', during or after food or drinks.

Some guidelines to make swallowing easier:

- Discuss the best sitting position with your speech and language therapist.
- Allow plenty of time and try to relax.
- Take small mouthfuls of food and drink.
- Always chew food thoroughly.
- Avoid mixing food and drink in the same mouthful.
- Colder drinks may be easier than hot.
- Thicker drinks may be easier than thin.
- Do not use spouts or straws when drinking, unless advised to by a speech and language therapist.
- Take advice from speech and language therapy regarding compensation techniques for swallowing rehabilitation.

After mealtimes:

- Do not lie down for 30 minutes after your meal.
- Check there is no food left in your mouth.

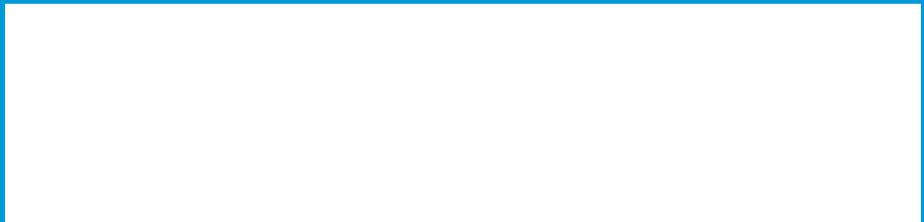
Other useful things to know:

- If swallowing tablets is difficult, some can be obtained in different forms e.g. syrup. Contact the pharmacist for details.
- Equipment is available to make eating and drinking easier; e.g. specially designed cutlery, cups, plates and non-slip mats. Contact your occupational therapist for details.
- If dentures are loose, swallowing may be more difficult. Contact your dentist who may be able to alter them to fit more comfortably.

Speech & Language Therapy Department

King's Mill Hospital, telephone 01623 622515, extension 3320.

You have been referred to:



Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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