

Dysphagia: Supporting People with Swallowing Difficulties – Important Questions to Ask

When providing support and care to an individual with swallowing difficulties, there are some important questions to consider.

- Is your swallowing ability reviewed regularly by a speech pathologist?
- Do you have a mealtime plan with recommendations?
- Have you had any swallowing xrays (videofluoroscopy) and what were the results?
- Have you had any choking episodes?
- When eating, do you notice a gurgly voice, wheezing, sneezing or coughing?
- Does food ever feel like it gets stuck at any point?
- Do you have a strong cough?
- Do you have a history of chest infections or pneumonia?
- Have you been prescribed multiple antibiotic rounds for chest infections?
- Have you been hospitalized more than once for chest infections?
- Has there been any documented aspiration pneumonia?
- Do you or have you been assessed for any underlying respiratory disease?
- Are there any indicators for sleep apnoea?
- Are you eating less or changing the texture of your food to make it easier to chew or swallow?
- Are you having difficulty swallowing your usual tablets?
- Do you halve, crush or chew medication to swallow it?
- Do you take any medication that makes you cough more, drowsy or changes how you move?
- If thickened fluids are prescribed, are there any possible interactions with the medication and the ingredients of the thickener?
- Has there been a change or deterioration in your ability to speak?
- Has there been any unexplained weight loss with other medical reasons excluded?
- Are there indicators for difficulty maintaining hydration?
- Do you have problems with constipation?
- Do you have any concerns or a history of problems with your teeth and oral care?
- Do you have a history of drooling or a change in the amount of drooling?
- If you have epilepsy, has there been any change in seizures or medication dosages?
- Do you have a history of reflux?
- Does your ability to swallow change what you do socially?
- Do you need someone to help you eat and drink due to changes in your abilities?
- Has there been any significant change in how you sit or move?
- Has there been any change in memory?
- Has there been any changes in sensation, smell or taste?

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