



REMINDER: Dysphagia

Description of Issue and Importance

- Dysphagia is difficulty with swallowing or eating.
- People with dysphagia have difficulty swallowing and may also experience pain while swallowing. Some individuals may be completely unable to swallow or may have trouble swallowing liquids, foods, or saliva.

Signs and symptoms associated with dysphagia include:

- Choking
- Pocketing of food in cheeks
- Complaining of food sticking in throat
- Reflux or heartburn
- Coughing
- Slow, effortful eating
- Watery eyes or runny nose during meals
- Excessive drooling
- Difficulty swallowing pills
- Avoidance of foods or fluids

Dysphagia is a serious threat to one's health because of the risk of aspiration, pneumonia, malnutrition, dehydration, weight loss, or airway obstruction.

Recommended Action and Prevention Strategy

- Observe for difficulty in swallowing.
- Communicate signs/symptoms of difficulty in swallowing to health care providers and team members.
- Develop care (risk) plans that not only address the risk of aspiration during mealtimes, but other activities in which the individual may be at risk. These may include: oral care, giving medication, bathing/showering, personal care, in-bed positioning.
- Identify individualized signs and symptoms of dysphagia.
- Assess possible signs of dysphagia by getting the individual a tableside swallow evaluation or swallow study.

References

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Swallowing disorders (dysphagia) in adults. Retrieved 09/15/2015 from:
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