

HEALTH & SAFETY: DYSPHAGIA

Description of Issue and Importance

Dysphagia is difficulty swallowing or eating.

People with dysphagia have difficulty swallowing and may also experience pain while swallowing. Some people 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; avoiding foods or fluids.

Dysphagia is a serious threat to one's health because of the risk of: aspiration; pneumonia; malnutrition; dehydration; weight loss; 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 mealtime but other activities in which the person may be at risk. These may include: mealtime; oral care; medication administration; bathing/showering; personal care; in-bed positioning.
- Identify individualized signs and symptoms of Dysphagia.
- Assess possible signs of dysphagia by providing a tableside swallow evaluation or swallow study.

Related Resources

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario - Dysphagia Booklet

profed.heartandstroke.ca/ClientImages/1/Dysphagia%20Booklet%20FINAL%2020050203.pdf

Dysphagia Resource Center www.dysphagia.com

Outreach Services

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For related reminders and resources, please visit DDRSOutreach.In.gov.



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