

4. EATING AND DRINKING

Swallowing problems are a serious health risk.



Reviewed September 2023. Free to use for personal use and with people you support. **This checklist can be downloaded from www.surreypb.org.uk**

Swallowing problems can cause serious health issues.
People can get a lot of chest infections.

It is important to have a swallowing assessment from a speech and language therapist if you are having problems.



Dysphagia is the medical term for swallowing problems.

Symptoms include coughing or choking when eating or drinking.

1

Has anyone noticed you having problems with swallowing?

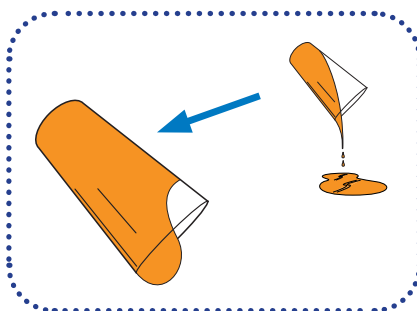


These are some signs that might suggest you have a swallowing problem:

- Regular chest infections.
- Coughing or choking when eating or drinking.
- Bringing food back up, sometimes through your nose.
- A feeling that food is stuck in your throat or chest.
- A change in your voice, a 'gurgly' or wet voice.



If you have any concerns, make a referral to a Speech and Language Therapist who can do a swallowing assessment.



They can teach people to swallow differently. They may suggest using a thickener to make drinks safer to swallow.

THINGS TO CHECK

2

Do you need more support to drink enough fluid each day?



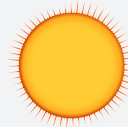
You need to drink enough fluid everyday to stay healthy.

Women should drink about eight 200ml glasses a day and men should drink about ten 200ml glasses.



You should drink more fluid if you are doing a lot of exercise.

You should drink more fluid in hot weather



All drinks count, including hot drinks such as tea and coffee, but water, milk and fruit juices are the healthiest.

Try not to drink many sugary drinks as these can be bad for your teeth.



THINGS TO CHECK

3

Has anyone noticed things you eat or drink causing you problems?



Some people have food allergies. It's important people who support you know about these.

Some foods can cause some people problems like tummy ache. This is called having a food intolerance. It's best not to eat these foods.



People can be intolerant to gluten (found in bread) and dairy products like milk.



You may need help to eat less sugar and fatty foods if you have diabetes.

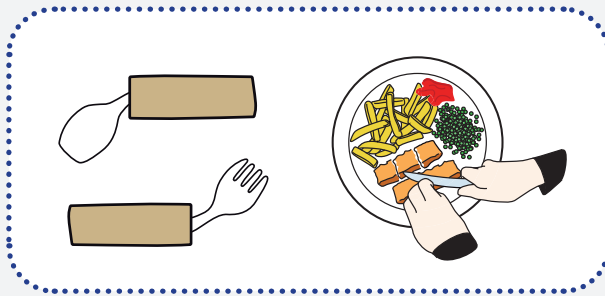


Talk to your doctor if you need more advice. They may be able to refer you to a dietician.

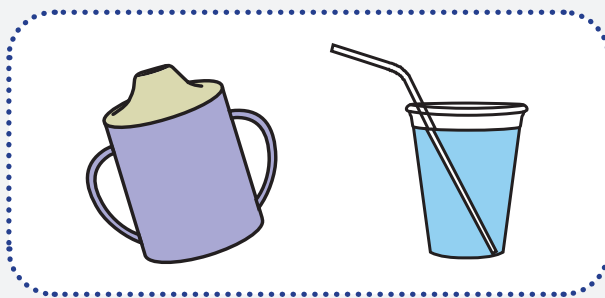
Tell your doctor if you often get heartburn or indigestion.

4

Do you need more support or aids to help you eat and drink?



Things like adapted cutlery or having food chopped up can help some people.



Things like adapted cups or using a straw to drink through can help some people.

If you have any concerns, make a referral to an Occupational Therapist who can give you advice.



Unexpected weight loss could mean you are having problems with eating and drinking.

It is important to see your doctor for advice if this happens.



See page 6 for useful websites about eating and drinking.

Easy Health

Easyhealth is run by an organisation called Generate Opportunities Ltd.

There are videos and Easy Read leaflets about healthy eating designed by many different organisations.

Look in the 'Health Leaflets' and 'Health Videos' sections.



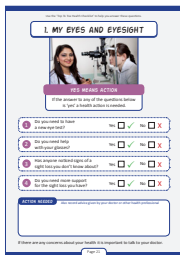
www.easyhealth.org.uk

USING THIS CHECKLIST

This checklist is a part of The Health Action Planning toolkit available from www.surreypb.org.uk

The Health Action Planning toolkit is free to use.

- There are 20 other checklists in the series covering a wide range of health issues.
- There is a Health Action Plan template for your checklist answers.



The Health Action Planning Toolkit was developed by Mike Leat from The Clear Communication People Ltd in partnership with Surrey & Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust health professionals and other health professionals in Surrey.

Special thanks to members of the Health Action Planning Group for their support and advice: Phil Boulter, Matthew Box, Kathryn Fisher, Maria Gainsford, Gemma Hare, Patrick Howarth, Denise Souter and Susann Stone

The Health Action Planning Toolkit is intended as a aid to support people with learning disabilities to access the support and advice of qualified health professionals. The Clear Communication People Ltd take no responsibility for medical diagnosis, advice and treatment given in conjunction with the use of this checklist.

- Easy Pics imagenbank © The Clear Communication People Ltd
- Some photosymbols used - go to www.photosymbols.com



The **Clear Communication** People Ltd

The development of this toolkit was made possible by initial funding from The Learning Disability Partnership Board in Surrey, and further funding from The South East Health Quality Forum.

The Clear Communication People Ltd also helped fund the development.