

Dysphagia Nutrition Solutions

Thick-It®

Trusted since 1987

What to do when you have trouble swallowing

More than 15 million Americans are treated for swallowing disorders each year. Many types of treatment are available and Doctors know much more today than ever before about the best ways to help people. With the right treatment, most individuals can safely swallow and enjoy delicious, nourishing diet.

If you experience any symptoms of swallowing difficulties, see your Doctor, not only because these problems can have serious consequences, but also, your Doctor can relieve your symptoms or refer you to a Speech Language Therapist who specializes in swallowing disorders.

Your treatment plan may call for adjustments in your posture while eating, changes in the consistency or firmness of the foods and liquids you eat, or for medications or surgery. Nearly 9 out of 10 people with swallowing problems see improvement with simple changes in food consistency and in their posture while eating.

The Importance of Food Consistency:

Some people with swallowing disorders have difficulty with either solid foods or liquids, while others have trouble with both. That's why it is so important to take in foods and liquids of just the right consistency.

For instance, persons who have difficulty with solids are often advised to eat moist or pureed foods that come together when chewed, instead of dry foods that crumble and become lost in the mouth.

Problems with swallowing thin liquids, such as water, are more common. Precise tongue control is required to gather and hold the liquids against the roof of the mouth until the swallowing reflex is triggered. Thicker liquids help keep these individuals hydrated, while lessening the risk of fluid entering the airway.

Even people who are able to swallow thin liquids can benefit from thicker consistencies, which will help them produce more saliva to aid swallowing and also help strengthen muscles used in moving the tongue.

Safe Swallowing Tips

Allow enough time for each meal and never rush. Swallow completely before you bite or sip again.

Remove loose dentures and choose soft foods.

Sit up straight. Use pillows for support, if needed. Position your head according to your health professionals instructions. Never eat while lying down or leaning back unless your health professional instructs you to do so.

Take small bites and sips. Use a regular teaspoon to keep bites between one-half to one level spoonful.

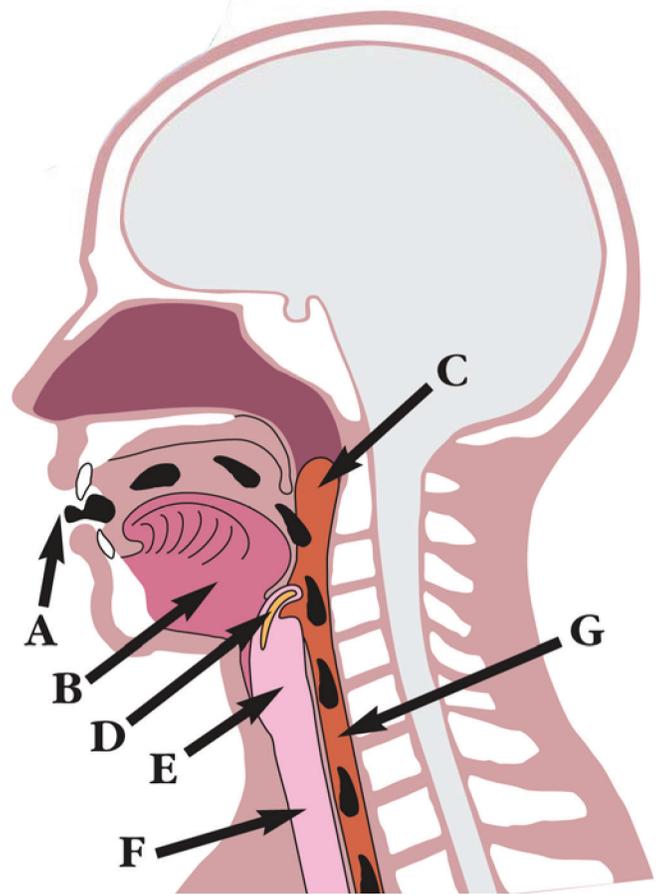
Listen rather than talk, when dining with others.

To learn more about swallowing problems contact the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) at 1.800.638.8255 or visit www.asha.org.

How Swallowing Happens

You may be surprised to learn that a simple action like swallowing is really quite complex. More than 40 pairs of muscles and 8 nerves are involved in moving food from the mouth to the stomach. Let's take a closer look at the process of swallowing.

Food (A) is chewed in the mouth, where saliva moistens it and makes swallowing easier. The tongue (B) pushes food or liquid to the back of the mouth and into the passage called the pharynx (C). Nerves send a message to the brain, which signals to start a series of muscle contractions called the swallowing reflex. The epiglottis (D) briefly closes off the larynx (E), or voice box, along with the trachea (F), or airway. This prevents food and liquids from entering and blocking the airway. Muscle contractions push food from the pharynx down into the esophagus (G), the canal leading to the stomach.



Why Swallowing Problems Occur

Swallowing problems can result from accidents, illnesses, or structural disorders and occur at any stage of the process. For example, when a person lacks strength, control, or feeling in the mouth, food or liquid can fall into the throat before the swallowing reflex is triggered.

The swallowing reflex can be delayed, incomplete, or absent altogether. Food can become trapped within the natural recesses of the pharynx. The larynx might not lift or close, or abnormal muscle contractions can fail to move food along.

A team of health professionals will evaluate your specific problem and develop a plan of treatment. The goal is to help you enjoy a nutritious diet safely. For many people, successful treatment involves changing the consistency of foods and liquids they consume.



Thick-It® has been the trusted name for dysphagia nutrition solutions since 1987. We have a complete line of products developed for people with swallowing problems. Available at pharmacies nationwide - no prescription necessary. Ask your Pharmacist for details or call our **Customer Care Center - 1.800.333.0003**.

Thick-It® Instant Food and Beverage Thickeners | Thick-It® Purees | Thick-It® AquaCareH2O® Beverages