



Valuable information
for our customers
living with dysphagia

Managing Your Dysphagia With Nutrition



DYSPHAGIA

Each year, between 300,000 and 700,000 individuals in the U.S experience difficulty swallowing.* It is a condition referred to as dysphagia and commonly involves complications and pain or discomfort when swallowing, affecting a person's ability to eat or drink. Dysphagia may be short or long-term and can occur at any time during a lifespan.



At Mom's Meals®, our mission is to improve life through better nutrition at home.

We deliver nutritious, refrigerated meals to any address nationwide. Enjoy the option to choose every meal, every delivery,** to empower you with a voice in your care.

What causes dysphagia?

Dysphagia can often be caused by:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Cerebral palsy
- Dental issues
- Meningitis and brain tumors
- Mouth, throat, or esophageal cancer
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Traumatic brain injury
- Spinal cord injury
- Stroke

How can you manage dysphagia?

One of the best ways is to modify the texture of foods (chop, mince, puree) and thicken fluids. This helps reduce the risk of choking or having material enter the airway. A health care team can provide a treatment plan that is right for you. This team may consist of:

- Doctor
- Nurse
- Occupational therapist
- Registered dietitian
- Speech pathologist

Your health care professional plays an important role in ensuring your plan includes the safest textures to prevent choking. This plan should be updated regularly, as a person's ability to chew and swallow safely can change over time.

*<https://dailydose.ttuhscc.edu/2022/may/shp-living-with-dysphagia.aspx#>

** Post-discharge members may receive a variety of meals based on their dietary preferences.

Why you need to manage dysphagia?

Continual dysphagia is a serious medical condition. If left untreated, there is an increased risk for choking and aspirating food into the lungs which may cause pneumonia. Some people may restrict their food or drink intake to reduce the risk of choking or discomfort. This can lead to malnutrition and dehydration.

What are soft or moist and minced foods?

Soft, moist and minced foods may also be called mechanically soft. These foods are best for people who have trouble chewing but can handle swallowing a variety of foods. They are also good for those with missing teeth, ill-fitting dentures and other chewing problems. Foods in this category are easier to chew. They include:

- Cereal products
- Cooked fruits and vegetables
- Moist ground meat
- Soft bread

Foods that “dissolve” in the mouth like graham crackers are also a good choice. If minced and moist textured foods are part of your plan, you will need to mash soft foods or cut them into tiny pieces.

What are pureed foods?

Pureed foods are smooth with a pudding-like texture. They are easy to swallow and do not require chewing. These foods are for people with moderate to severe dysphagia or with no ability to chew. Pureed foods are also helpful for those with ongoing digestion issues. These issues can be caused by conditions such as ulcerative colitis or diverticulitis.



Helpful Tips

- ✓ **Sit upright.** This will help food and drinks go down easily.
- ✓ **Chew slowly.** Chewing food completely before swallowing will reduce the risk of choking.
- ✓ **Use assistive devices.** Modified spoons, forks, plates and cups make self-feeding easier. Your occupational therapist can tell you what options are available.
- ✓ **Cut food into small pieces.** It is also helpful to have someone around to assist during mealtime.
- ✓ **Stay hydrated and well nourished.** A supplement or multi-vitamin may help with this. Talk to your health care team.
- ✓ **Try oral motor exercises.** These may help improve your swallowing. Your speech language pathologist can tell you what exercises are right for you.
- ✓ **Maintain good oral hygiene.** Making sure you have a clean mouth will help prevent toothaches, cavities and tooth loss. Visit your dentist regularly for a checkup and cleaning.

What are the different textures of fluids?

Some people with dysphagia may have difficulties swallowing liquids. Because of this, they may need liquids to be thickened. Below are terms and definitions that describe the consistency of liquids.

- **Nectar-like or mildly thick fluids.** These run fast through the prongs of a fork and flow slowly off a spoon. You may be able to drink these from a cup.
- **Honey-like or moderately thick.** These fluids slowly drip through the prongs of a fork. You may be able to drink these from a cup, but they may not go through a straw.
- **Pudding-like or extremely thick fluids.** These do not pour or go through the prongs of a fork. They are too thick to drink from a cup. It is best to spoon them into your mouth.

Pre-thickened liquids are available in all textures. Commercial thickeners are also available for hot and cold liquids. Follow the instructions when using these products to get the thickness you need.

Which Mom's Meals are best if I have dysphagia?

Any of the meals on our pureed menu are helpful in managing dysphagia and are:

- Designed to meet the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics requirement for dysphagia (Level 1 - Pureed Nutritional Therapy)
- Intended to meet the guidelines of level 4 - pureed of the International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative (IDDSI) Framework guidelines
- Designed by registered dietitians and professional chefs to be full of flavor
- Created in USDA and FDA-inspected facilities, providing the highest level of compliance with federal regulations governing food production

Our goal is to give you the favorites that you love with the texture you need. Although we do not offer a soft or minced and moist menu, many foods on our menus may be suitable.



At Mom's Meals, our menus are designed to support the nutritional needs of many common chronic conditions. For additional questions about how to manage your dysphagia with Mom's Meals, visit our website at momsmeals.com.

The good news is that Mom's Meals makes it easy.



We provide you the basis for nutritious eating with dysphagia. We offer pureed meals which are an important part of staying healthy with dysphagia.

For more information visit:
momsmeals.com/dysphagia

Contact your health care provider with any questions about your dysphagia.

For more information about nutrition visit:
www.eatright.org

Sources:

<https://swallowingdisorderfoundation.com/deciphering-dysphagia>
<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/dysphagia>
<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/mechanical-soft-diet>

