

Manage Your Dysphagia with Nutrition

Valuable information for our customers
living with Dysphagia





Dysphagia refers to difficulty swallowing. It is a medical and feeding issue which is more common in older adults. Without treatment, it can lead to malnutrition, weight loss, aspiration pneumonia, dehydration and decreased quality of life. There is also the risk of choking if food blocks the airway.

At Mom's Meals, we know that better health begins with the meals we eat. This is why we provide nutritious meals for every stage of life. We offer meals with modified textures for those who have trouble swallowing. And, since everyone has different likes and needs, we give you the option to choose every meal, every delivery. Our goal is to provide a pathway to help you manage your Dysphagia.

WHAT CAUSES DYSPHAGIA?

Stroke, head or neck injury are a few causes. Cancer, cerebral palsy and forms of dementia are a few more. Dysphagia should be treated by a healthcare team. This team may include a doctor, a registered dietitian and a nurse. A speech language pathologist or occupational therapist may also be part of this team. Each plays a critical role in ensuring the treatment plan includes the safest textures to prevent choking.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF DYSPHAGIA?

Yes. Dysphagia can differ depending on the severity of it. Diets can consist of regular textures, mechanically soft (or minced and moist) and pureed foods. Modifying food textures makes it easier to chew and move around in the mouth. It also ensures foods can be safely swallowed to reduce the risk of choking. Choking is when food goes into the windpipe that leads to the lungs. The thickness of fluids may also need to be adjusted. A person's ability to chew and swallow safely can change over time. This may or may not improve. You should follow the plan set up by your healthcare team. Eat and drink the texture of food and fluids listed in that plan.

WHAT ARE MECHANICALLY SOFT OR MOIST AND MINCED FOODS?

These foods are best for people who have trouble chewing, but can handle 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 cooked fruits and vegetables. Moist ground meat, and soft bread and cereal products are also part of this group. Foods that “dissolve” in the mouth like graham crackers are also a good choice. Make sure you follow the food plan that your healthcare team gives you. This is because, everyone’s needs and tolerance for food is unique. Mom’s Meals does not offer a mechanically soft or minced and moist menu, but many foods on our menus may be suitable. In order to choose meals that best meet your needs, visit our website or call our customer care team.

WHAT ARE PUREED FOODS?

Pureed foods are for those with moderate to severe dysphagia. They are also good for those with dental issues or minimal or no ability to chew. Pureed foods are smooth with a pudding-like consistency. They are easy to swallow and do not require chewing. Mom’s Meals provides a Pureed Menu that has a variety of meals that meet these guidelines. Our pureed meals are designed by our chefs to be full of flavor. They give you the favorites that you love with the texture you need to manage your dysphagia safely.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT FLUID CONSISTENCIES?

Some people with dysphagia may have difficulties swallowing liquids. 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 consistencies. Commercial thickeners are also available to thicken hot and cold liquids. Make sure to follow the instructions when using these products to get the thickness you need.



Helpful Tips

- ✓ **Sit upright.** This will help food and drinks go down easily.
- ✓ **Chew slowly.** Make sure food is chewed completely before swallowing to 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.** This helps with chewing and swallowing. 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. Your healthcare team can help you find one if you need it.
- ✓ **Try oral motor exercises.** They may help by improving your swallowing function. Your Speech Language Pathologist can tell you what exercises are right for you.
- ✓ **Maintain good oral hygiene.** Make sure you have a clean mouth. This will help prevent toothaches, cavities and tooth loss. Visit your dentist regularly for a checkup and cleaning.

We hope this information is helpful. Our goal is to help you manage your nutrition plan. Contact your healthcare provider with any questions you have.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NUTRITION

visit: www.eatright.org



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.

