

Safe Swallowing Tips

1. Brush teeth carefully twice daily. Brush your tongue, your cheeks, and your gums. After lunch, use a mouthwash. Buy an alcohol-free mouthwash such as Biotene. Ask the pharmacist which kinds don't contain alcohol. Frequent use of an alcohol-based mouthwash leads to a dry mouth and thick saliva.

2. While you are eating:

- Pay attention when you swallow.
- Make sure your head is facing forward, not turned to one side.
- Maintain good posture so that the swallowing mechanism is in the optimal position and also to provide sufficient air in case you need to cough. Eat in an upright position.
- Take a bolus amount that feels safe, ie small bites.
- Try not to talk while eating. Talking and eating at the same time are hard to coordinate.
- Take fatigue into consideration when planning meals. If you are feeling unwell or especially tired, divide your nutrition over several small meals, eat earlier in the day, or plan a nap before dinner.
- Chew food thoroughly.
- Eat at a rate that feels safe. Do not try to keep pace with companions' ability to chew and swallow. Eat several small meals so that you can eat a smaller amount during meals taken with other people.
- Tuck your chin to your neck while swallowing. This opens up your esophagus, allowing food to pass down more easily.
- Double swallow....When you swallow, swallow again immediately.
- Know that alcohol decreases coordination of the muscles.

3. Drinks:

- Clear drinks such as tea and juice are runny. They are hard to control in your mouth. If you add thickener such as Thicken-Thin, Miraspense, or Thick-it, the drink will be easier to hold together in your mouth and throat. Ask at your pharmacy for a thickener; they might need to order it in for you. Water doesn't need to be thickened.
- Carbonated drinks may irritate your throat, making it more difficult to swallow.
- Avoid drinking fluids that are salty, such as tomato juice or chicken broth, or very acidic, such as grapefruit juice or orange juice. These fluids are more irritating to the lungs if aspirated.
- Use a sippy cup or sports bottle.
- Use a straw to sip liquids.
-

4. Foods

Anne MacCallum, GF Strong, December 17
2009

RE:

Page 2 of 2

- Be careful when eating foods with uneven consistencies (e.g. chili, soup). Take spoonfuls of one consistency at a time. For example, when eating chili, eat one spoonful with beans and the next spoonful with meat and sauce.
- Choose food textures that feel comfortable and safe to eat.
- Eat a soft texture of food. A good test is to make sure you can mash your food with the back of a fork. Crunchy food takes more energy to chew and is more likely to cause an obstruction.
- Cut meat and other chewy foods into $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces so that if you swallow a piece without chewing, your risk of obstruction is lower.
- Mix corn and peas with mashed potatoes.
- If fatigued, consider blender drinks as a partial meal replacement. You can add protein powder, yoghurt, wheat germ, etc.
- Moisten food with gravy or sauce.
- Sip water frequently with foods.

5. Pills

- Take with a thickened fluid.
- Take with yoghurt or pudding instead of water.
- Take one pill at a time.

6. At the end of a meal

- Finish your meal with a drink.
- After your last drink, do a couple of dry swallows.
- Stay upright for a half an hour.