

Swallowing Disorders

Dysphagia is the medical term for swallowing difficulties.

Risk Factors Include:

- Trouble chewing
- Dry mouth (less saliva)
- Painful or missing teeth
- Muscle loss
- Changes to the swallowing muscles
- Damage to nervous system (e.g. stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease)
- Changes in how the mouth and throat feel



Common Signs & Symptoms:

- Difficulty chewing
- Needing to swallow multiple times for one sip or bite
- Coughing or choking while eating or drinking
- Drooling
- Food left in mouth after swallowing
- Voice changes during or after eating/drinking (e.g. voice sounds wet or gurgly)
- Feeling food stuck in the throat or chest after swallowing

See a healthcare professional if you have any of these symptoms.

Ways to Help:

- Get assessed by a speech-language pathologist
- Eat at a table, while seated
- Practice good, daily oral hygiene (practice of keeping the mouth healthy, e.g., with brushing teeth)
- Check the mouth after eating and remove leftover food in the mouth



Older adults with dysphagia are at risk of getting other health problems. These include pneumonia (lung infection), dehydration (not enough fluids in the body) and malnutrition (not getting enough nutrients).

