

Hints and tips on making eating and drinking easier

- > If it is taking you a long time to finish your meal, you might want to consider taking smaller meals more often.
- > After a mouthful of food, you may find taking a drink helpful to wash away anything that might feel as if it's sticking in your throat.
- > Finish each mouthful fully before you take another one, this helps to prevent choking.
- > Eat your meals in a relaxed and comfortable environment.
- > Sit in a well supporting chair.
- > Eat and drink things that you enjoy, and that you can manage more easily. For instance, you may find it easier to stick to things that are easier to chew (mince instead of steak etc).
- > Take small mouthfuls at a time. Some people find using a teaspoon helps.
- > To help with concentration, try and reduce or eliminate any distractions, such as the TV or radio.
- > Try not to talk whilst eating or drinking.
- > If you wear dentures, make sure they fit and are fixed securely.

If you feel you are coughing or choking at mealtimes, contact your doctor. They can refer you to your local Speech and Language Therapy Service, which will be able to help you.

After mealtimes, it may be helpful to complete a 'Swallowing Diary'. This may help you or your Speech and Language Therapist identify what you are having difficulty with.

Swallowing Diary

Monitor your swallowing difficulties by recording them in the table below:

Date	Time	What did you have difficulty with? (Food?, drink?)	What happened? (e.g. coughed, choked, cleared my throat, took a drink)	How were you feeling? (e.g. tired, unwell, needed medication)	Position (standing, sitting, lying in bed, other, etc)

This diary helps you keep a note of any difficulties you might be having. Sometimes it can help to see a pattern of what is causing the problem. Other times it may highlight how often this is happening.