

# Make Feeding Safer for Residents with Dysphagia

Developed by the Stroke Strategy of Southeastern Ontario. Distributed with permission.

## Make Feeding Safer



Over 50% of the residents in your home have swallowing or feeding problems. People with stroke are at increased risk of swallowing problems.



Those with swallowing problems are at risk of:

- pneumonia
- malnutrition
- dehydration
- weight loss
- social isolation



### What to listen for

- a wet, gurgly or phlegmy sounding voice
- throat-clearing
- coughing or choking
- resident complaining of:
  - A 'lump in their throat'
  - Throat 'feels tight'
  - Something 'sticking in their throat'
  - Heartburn

**If you notice a change in a resident's eating or swallowing, it should be reported to the team**



### What to look for

- Pocketing food or medication in mouth or cheek
- Spitting out food
- Drooling
- Problems chewing
- Repetitive swallowing
- Shortness of breath after meals
- Taking a long time to eat
- Losing interest in food or leaving food on their plate

## Keys to Successful Feeding



- Oral care before and after eating
- Minimize distractions
- Make sure resident is sitting up at 60° to 90° angle and make sure resident's head is not tipped back
- Make sure you are at or slightly below resident's eye level – have a seat
- Use assistive devices when required

- Remind resident to keep swallowing
- One food type at a time
- Give one level teaspoonful of food or fluid at a time
- Check for complete swallowing after each spoonful
- Check if food is left in mouth

### Food for thought



- Encourage the residents to accept the food textures. Be positive. What you say does make a difference
- Special diet textures include **pureed and minced** foods
- Popsicles, ice cream, liquid supplements and milkshakes are **not considered thickened fluids**

## Oral Care



### DO NOT USE...

- Oral swabs because they do not clean the mouth properly
- Alcohol-based mouthwashes as they dry and irritate the mouth
- Toothpaste or mouthwash if the resident is at risk of aspiration

### DO...

- Provide oral care **before** and after meals, each morning and at bedtime
- Provide assistance with brushing mouth, teeth and dentures
- Check for **pocketing** of food and medications
- Use a **soft** toothbrush

**If you notice a change in a resident's eating or swallowing, it should be reported to the team**

STROKE STRATEGY  
of Southeastern Ontario