

Swallow awareness - Dysphagia

Dysphagia describes eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties in infants, children and adults.

Last reviewed
18 June 2026

What is Dysphagia?



Dysphagia describes eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties in infants, children and adults.

People with dysphagia often have other health conditions that they are being treated for, which can affect their eating, drinking and swallowing abilities (RCSLT 2023)

Remote video URL

Signs, symptoms and advice

- [Roisin's story \(October 2025\)](#)
- [Fundamentals of care for eating, drinking and swallowing](#)
- [Recommendations for eating, drinking & swallowing document \(REDS\)](#)
- [Living with swallowing difficulties \(Vimeo video\)](#)

- [The Path to safer swallowing at mealtimes \(A4 poster\)](#)
- [Eating, drinking and swallowing - A guide for carers of people living with a dementia](#)
- [Swallow aware \(poster\)](#)
- [Advice for people living with swallowing difficulties \(dysphagia\) and their carers](#)
- [Advice following a swallowing assessment \(easy read version\)](#)
- [Advice following a swallow assessment \(A5 service user booklet\)](#)
- [Children's swallow awareness \(A3 poster\)](#)
- **[Swallow Aware Day \(Vimeo video - March 2026\)](#)**
Some children and young people have eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties, which can increase the risk of choking or aspiration. A regional resource has been developed in partnership with speech and language therapists and education staff to shares simple tips to promote safer meal and snack time experiences. Small changes help make meal and snack times safer and more positive for every pupil - [Safer Meals \(poster, 2026\)](#).

Remote video URL

Eating, drinking and swallowing service user/carer newsletter

[January 2026 - https://view.pagetiger.com/jan-26-edition-dysphagia-ni-newsletter/1](https://view.pagetiger.com/jan-26-edition-dysphagia-ni-newsletter/1)

[January 2026 - https://view.pagetiger.com/january-26-service-user-and-carer-newsletter/1](https://view.pagetiger.com/january-26-service-user-and-carer-newsletter/1)

[June 2025 - Eating, drinking and swallowing newsletter for those living with dysphagia and their carers newsletter](#)

[March 2025 - Eating, drinking and swallowing newsletter for those living with dysphagia and their carers](#)

[September 2024 - Dysphagia NI service user/carer newsletter](#)

[June 2024 - Dysphagia NI service user newsletter](#)

[March 2024 - Eating, drinking and swallowing service user/carer newsletter](#)

Training

Dysphagia NI has worked in partnership with the Clinical Education Centre to develop a Universal Swallow Awareness training package which aims to

- Describe what eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties mean, and their associated health risks.
- Identify possible signs of eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties.
- Explain how to support people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties.
- Discuss eating, drinking and swallowing safety and awareness.
- Recognise if someone is choking.

The training would be useful for people who are experiencing eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties, their families, healthcare staff who are not directly involved in the preparing food, serving food or assisting someone with dysphagia to eat and drink and the general public

[Non-HSC Universal Swallow Awareness - Overview \(hscni.net\)](#)

Healthcare professionals who are directly involved in the involved in the preparing food, serving food or assisting someone with dysphagia to eat and drink should access a targeted training programme which is available on LearnHSCNI Platform

Oral care

[Oral hygiene advice for people with swallowing difficulties](#)

[Mouth care awareness video for people who care for adults with dysphagia](#)

Medications

Finding your Medicines Hard to Swallow? [Swallow aware campaign](#)

[PHA swallow aware, NI Formulary resource \(infographic 3 poster\)](#)

[Swallowing difficulties and thickening agents \(NI Formulary\)](#)

Nutrition and hydration

[Staying hydrated with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties \(poster\)](#)

[Staying hydrated with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties leaflet \(A4 folded to A5\)](#)

[Resource Food First for Dysphagia](#)

Food and drink modifications

[IDDSI - IDDSI Framework](#)

- [IDDSI Level 3 snack table.pdf](#)
- [IDDSI Level 4 snack table.pdf](#)
- [IDDSI Level 5 snack table.pdf](#)
- [IDDSI Level 6 snack table \(002\).pdf](#)
- [IDDSI Level 7 Easy Chew snack table.pdf](#)

(NEW) [Appendix 1 Patient information Thickening Milk \(May 2026\)](#)

[Thickening drinks for people with swallowing difficulties](#)

[A guide to high risk foods for people with dysphagia](#)

[Thickened fluids clinicians briefing](#)

[Resource Food First for Dysphagia.pdf](#)

Mealtimes matter

Mealtimes Matter is a regionally agreed framework to maximise service user safety and ensure a high-quality experience always occurs at every meal, drink and snack time.

- [PHA mealtimes matter framework](#)
- [Mealtimes matter resources - 1 \(pagetiger.com\)](#)
- [What is Mealtimes Matter?](#)

Hospitality (Eating out)

[Swallow aware factsheet](#) - this factsheet aims to improve the experience for customers with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) by providing top tips for hospitality

[Dysphagia awareness wallet card](#) - A wallet card has been produced for people living with dysphagia to use when they are eating out in restaurants, cafes and bars. The wallet card can be requested from your Speech and Language Therapist or by contacting dysphagiani@hscni.net

End of life care

[Swallowing information for end of life care](#)

Safety advice

[Be safety aware with food and drink \(A5 leaflet\)](#)

[Be safety aware with food and drink \(poster\)](#)

[What is choking?](#)

Theme of the month

[February 2026 - Eating, drinking, swallowing challenges and dementia](#)

[January 2026 - Understanding your EDS supervision level on your REDS](#)

[December 2025 - Eating out at Christmas](#)

[November 2025 - Be Safety Aware with Food and Drink](#)

[October 2025 - Oral Care advice for those caring for adults with dysphagia](#)

[August 2025 - What to expect at a Speech & Language Therapy Assessment](#)

[July 2025 - Use of thickening agents with eating, drinking & swallowing difficulties](#)

[June 2025 - Medications and Eating, Drinking and Swallowing Difficulties](#)

[May 2025 - Fundamentals of care for eating, drinking and swallowing](#)

[April 2025 - The PATH to safe swallowing at mealtimes](#)

[March 2025 - Nutrition](#)

[February 2025 - IDDSI Explained](#)

[January 2025 - Signs & Symptoms of Dysphagia and Signposting Advice](#)

December 2024 - High risk foods and Christmas

[Dysphagia NI December - High Risk Foods and Christmas](#)

November 2024 - Malnutrition

[Dysphagia NI November - Malnutrition & Dysphagia](#)

October 2024 - Get connected

[Dysphagia NI October Theme of the Month - Get Connected](#)

September 2024 - Oral care

[Dysphagia NI September Theme of the Month - Oral care advice for those caring for adults with dysphagia](#)

August 2024 - Hydration

[Dysphagia NI August 2024 - Theme of the Month - Hydration advice for those caring for a person with dysphagia](#)

July 2024 - Picnic and BBQ season

Summertime is also barbecue season (weather permitted!), therefore our first theme will be based around picnic and barbecue ideas/alternatives. [Dysphagia NI July 2024 - Theme of the Month](#)

Swallow Aware campaign

The Swallow Aware Campaign seeks to adopt a regional approach to -

1. Raise awareness of:

- the signs and symptoms of dysphagia
- the risks associated with dysphagia

- how and when to get a referral for specialist swallowing assessment by Speech and Language Therapy
- how to support someone living with dysphagia

2. **Listen to understand the lived experience of people living with dysphagia** and their families / carers and engage them in the work taken forward as part of the Swallow Aware campaign. This will include building relationship with community and voluntary sector organisations.

3. **Working in partnership with the hospitality industry** to provide information to restaurants / bars and other food and drink outlets on how to help support people living with dysphagia.

How to get involved

If you have experienced swallowing difficulties or are a carer with experience in helping those with swallowing difficulties we would like to hear from you. Please click on the links below to find out more.

- [Engage website](#)
- [Service user carer information pack](#)

Useful links

[RCSLT](#)

[IDDSI - IDDSI Framework](#)

Downloads

Attachment	Size
Safer Meals poster 2026.pdf	216.09 KB
Appendix 1 Patient information Thickening Milk (May 2026).pdf	93.12 KB