



ARE YOU CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH EATING, DRINKING AND SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES?

What is your role and responsibility in supporting the safety of people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties?



What can you do to improve safety with food and drinks?

People with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties have complex healthcare needs. All staff must be able to recognise and communicate these needs with the wider team. It is your responsibility to ensure **safe** snacks, meals, drinks and serving processes are in place.

This leaflet has been developed in response to a Reminder of Best Practice Letter SQR-SAI-2021-075 (all PoC) Risk of Serious Harm or Death from Choking on Foods and outlines your responsibilities as laid out in the recommendations.

[SQR Reminder of Best Practice Letter](#)



All staff caring for people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties:

- Refer to the person's most up-to-date Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) '**Eating, Drinking, Swallowing Recommendations Sheet**' within their care plan and strictly adhere to the recommendations.
- Agreed communication and meal time systems must be in place to support the SLT Eating Drinking and Swallowing (EDS) recommendations. The agreed plan should be written down and communicated widely with all staff.
- 'Nil by Mouth' alerts or signs should be clearly visible near the person who is 'Nil by Mouth' and the NBM status communicated widely to all of the team at pivotal times during the day e.g. handovers / safety briefs.
- You should highlight the needs of people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties at important times. You must communicate the needs of people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties at safety critical periods throughout the day; such as handover, meal and snack times, when moving between facilities, attending day centres or going out in the care of other people.
- Ensure all team members are aware of eating, drinking and swallowing needs by implementing a 'SAFETY PAUSE' before serving food and drinks by asking each other "What patient safety issues for food and drinks must we be aware of today?"
- Ensure foods or fluids that pose a risk to individuals with EDS difficulties are stored securely.



Care & Catering Staff:

- Must complete the recommended eSwallow Awareness Training and keep it up-to-date.
- You **MUST** be fully informed of the individual's SLT EDS recommendations before serving or assisting with food and drinks.
- You must ensure unsafe foods and drinks are out of sight or out of reach of vulnerable people e.g. food on tea trolleys, nursing/admin stations and communal areas.
- Always check and be clear about the agreed/formal process for preparing, serving and delivering meals, drinks and snacks safely. If unsure check with the nurse or person in charge.
- Share eating, drinking and swallowing needs or concerns to all staff on duty with you and give a verbal and written handover to other care/catering staff as appropriate to your role.
- Put a **SAFETY PAUSE** in place with your colleagues as part of the food and drinks serving process i.e. "What patient safety issues for food and drinks must we be aware of today?"



Managers or Nurse in Charge:

- Ensure all team members/staff have completed recommended eSwallow Awareness Training. This will support them in identifying and managing the needs of people with EDS difficulties. Keep a record of this training for your staff.
- Ensure sure Speech and Language Therapy 'EDS recommendations' are up to date, and any changes are effectively communicated with all staff, and filed where all staff can easily access the information.
- Introduce a formal process to serve and deliver meals, drinks and snacks safely. Clearly identify team roles and responsibilities and include a SAFETY PAUSE. Systems should include domestic and catering staff.
- Ensure there is a process for sharing information about swallowing difficulties at critical times such as mealtimes/snack-times; upon transfer to other care settings and for outings.
- Ensure there are adequate, safe, storage facilities for food/ drinks in communal areas.



Helpful Resources:

- **Public Health Agency Dysphagia NI**
Dysphagia resources (<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/dysphagia-resources>)
- Regionally endorsed Swallowing Awareness (Dysphagia) Training for health and social care staff that provides the knowledge to manage and support people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. You can access the training as follows:
 - **HSC Trust Staff: Leadership Centre.**
Dysphagia (www.hsclearning.com)
 - **Care Homes:** by registration with HSC Learning
 - **NISCC staff directed via**
<https://learningzone.niscc.info/>
- **International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI)** - <https://iddsi.org>

Be careful!
Be aware!
Keep everyone safe!



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