



Produced for the Public Health Agency,
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STAYING HYDRATED WITH EATING, DRINKING AND SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES (DYSPHAGIA)

Up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of people with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) suffer from dehydration. If your Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) has recommended you add thickener to drinks, you may find that you are drinking less than normal.

Dehydration can cause:

- Clots and heart attacks
- Urinary tract infections
- Pressure sores
- Adverse drug interactions
- Hospital admission
- Increased risk of death
- Acute kidney injury

Being hydrated can help with:

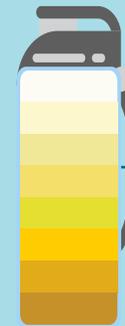
- Low blood pressure
- Dizziness and falls
- Incontinence
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Dry mouth
- Constipation
- Memory
- Concentration and reaction time

Ensure that any SLT Recommendations for drinks are followed at all times, and that drinks are at the correct IDDSI level. Check before offering a drink to anyone who may have a swallowing difficulty.

Tips to increase fluid intake:

- Encourage a variety of drinks.
- Have a drink first thing in the morning before breakfast.
- Drink fluids with oral medications.
- Drink regularly throughout the day. Try to establish a routine, or set an alarm to remind yourself.
- Try keeping track of how much you drink each day.
- Include foods with high fluid content, e.g. soups, sauces, custard, yoghurt, fruit and vegetables. This must always be in line with your recommended IDDSI level.
- Specially adapted cups are available if needed - ask your SLT for more information.
- If you are caring for someone with dysphagia, be aware of their preferences for drinks and how they are presented.

Aim to drink 8 glasses or cups (around 2 litres) daily to stay hydrated:



Healthy urine

The person is dehydrated.
Take measures to support fluid intake.

Tips when thickening drinks:

- Ensure you measure correctly.
- Let hot drinks cool slightly before thickening.
- Do not add ice.
- Milk can take longer to thicken (10-15 mins).
- Stir fizzy drinks with a metal spoon before thickening to prevent them from separating.
- Do not add thickening powder to nutritional supplement drinks - speak to your Dietitian.

If you need support or advice about using thickening powder contact your SLT or doctor for more information.

Thickening powder must always be stored safely - it is a serious choking risk if eaten in dry, powdered form.

If a person has swallowing difficulties they may have been recommended a specific fluid level called an IDDSI level. Please note that suggested drinks may not be suitable for people with swallowing difficulties. Always check the persons recommended IDDSI fluid level before providing drinks