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<p>Os oes arnoch angen gwasanaeth cyfiethu neu gopi o'r ddogfen hon mewn ieithoedd eraill, tâp sain, Braille neu brint mawr, siaradwch ag aelod o staff CWP, e-bost info@cwps.nhs.uk neu ysgrifennwch i: Communications, Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Upton Lea, Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1BQ.</p>

Dysphagia



For more information see www.cwp.nhs.uk.

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**Information about
swallowing difficulties**

What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is a term used to describe eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties, for example:

- Difficulty getting food and drink in the mouth
- Difficulty controlling or keeping food and drink in the mouth
- Difficulty swallowing food and drink

Causes of Dysphagia

Dysphagia is caused by a medical condition for example:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Stroke/Head injury
- Dementia
- A Syndrome such as Downs syndrome or Rhett's Syndrome

External factors can also have an effect on a person's ability to eat and drink and swallow safely. These can include

- Being in a distracting environment
- A person's posture
- A person's emotional or mental health
- Some medications

Contact Details

Speech and language therapists are based within the learning disability community teams detailed below.

If you have a query please contact the team at the base nearest to you.

Wirral

Address: Millennium Centre, Twickenham Drive, Leasowe, Wirral
CH46 1PQ
Tel: 0300 303 3157

Cheshire West —Eastway

Address: Countess of Chester Health Park, Liverpool Road, Chester
CH2 1BQ
Tel: 01244 397 222

Cheshire West (Vale Royal) - Wyvern House

Address: Wyvern House, The Drummer, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1AH
Tel: 01606 288850

Cheshire East (South Cheshire) - Stalbridge Road Clinic

Address: 54 Stalbridge Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7LP
Tel: 01270 656 335

Cheshire East - Rosemount Lodge

Address: Chester Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8QA
Tel: 01625 509 013

Trafford

Address: 3rd Floor, Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale,
Manchester M33 7ZF
Tel: 0161 912 2810

Why is it important to make any changes the Speech and Language Therapist recommends?

Sometimes people with dysphagia are at risk of food or drink “going down the wrong way” into their windpipe or lungs instead of into their food pipe and stomach. This is called aspiration.

Aspiration can cause chest infections, pneumonia and overtime can cause irreversible damage to lung tissue. In some circumstances this can be life threatening.

People with learning disabilities have a higher risk of choking.

Choking is sometimes called asphyxiation and is when someone is unable to breath because food or thick saliva is blocking their air-way.

Difficulties eating and drinking can make mealtime and drinks more effortful and less enjoyable and can cause weight lost and dehydration.

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If you have any more questions about eating, drinking or swallowing issues please contact your local speech and language therapist or speak to your GP.

Common Signs of Dysphagia

Sometimes a person may only have one sign of dysphagia, sometimes several signs may occur together.

- Coughing during or immediately after eating or drinking
- Choking (asphyxiation)
- Wet sounding or gurgly voice, noises or breathing during or after eating or drinking
- Food sticking in the throat or food pipe
- Having to swallow several times on a single mouthful of food
- An uncomfortable or effortful swallow
- Getting repeated chest infections or chest infections that don't clear up
- Watering eyes when eating or drinking
- Refusing to eat or drinking and subsequent weight loss
- Distress or behaviour that can be challenging at mealtimes
- Breathlessness



What do I do if I think I or someone I care for has dysphagia?

Contact your local community learning disability team and ask to speak to the Speech and Language Therapists.

If someone you are caring for has something stuck in their throat and are unable to breath call 999 and ask for the ambulance service.

Why does a Speech and Language Therapist work with people with a swallowing problem?

Speech and language therapists have a specialist knowledge of the muscles and nerves of the head and neck (anatomy). This is because many of the muscles and nerves used for speaking are also used for swallowing,

What will the Speech and Language Therapist do?

Find out whether there is a problem with eating, drinking or swallowing. To do this they may:

- Check whether you or the person you care for has capacity to consent to the assessment and if not decide if it is in your/the person you care for best interest for the assessment and treatment to take place
- Visit you/the person you care for at home and/or at day services, respite, etc. They may need to visit several times.
- Ask questions about your/the person you support health and past medical history and how eating, drinking and swallowing is for you/them and if anyone has any concerns.
- Observe a meal, snack or drink time. Sometimes the Speech and Language Therapist might ask if it's OK to feel your/the person's neck and listen to the swallow with a stethoscope
- Talk to family, GP, health professionals and any care staff who know you or the person you are caring for.



What will the Speech and Language Therapist do?

Treat any problems that they find to make eating, drinking and swallowing safer, to do this they may:

Recommend changes to:

- the consistencies or texture of food or drink
- the posture you/the person you care for is in when they are eating and drinking
- Utensils or cups
- The environment a person eats or drinks in
- How you/the person you support cleans their teeth
- We might need to refer you/the person you support to other health professionals, for example: physiotherapist, dieticians, a doctor
- Sometimes a person needs an x-ray of their swallow, this is called a videofluoroscopy. This is done as an outpatient in a local hospital.
- Work with other professionals on how to manage reflux (indigestion/heart burn).
- Write a report for the person, family members, carers and professionals
- Provide training for family members and carers, this may be on a general course or specific training designed around a person.